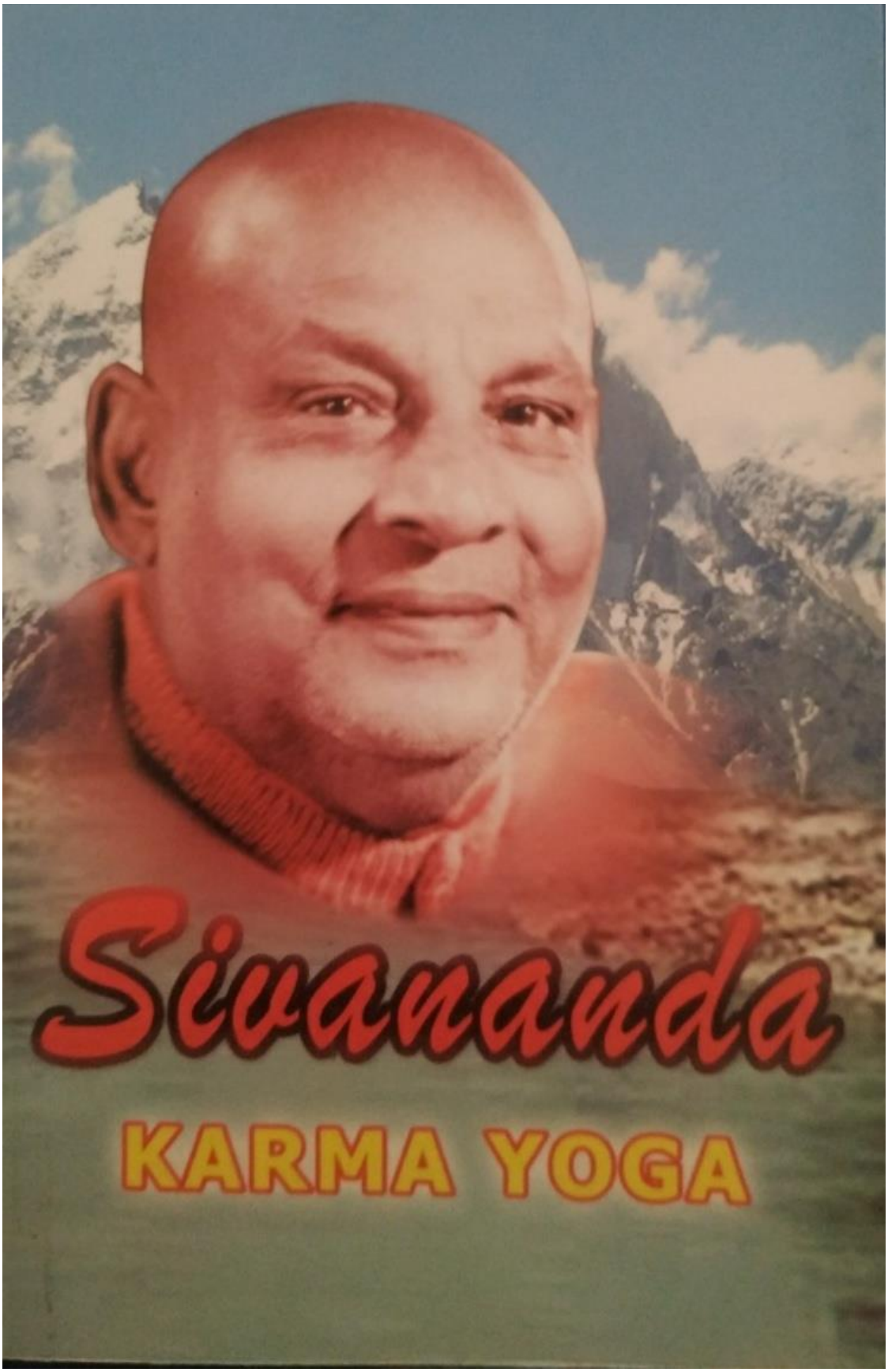
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Karma Yoga

By Swami Sivananda

Life and Works of Swami Sivananda

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PREFACE

Swami Sivananda did not write text books as such. The books he wrote were the outpourings of wisdom from his own direct realisation of the Truth.

From his books you will derive not only the benefit of his wisdom and knowledge of both practical and esoteric matters pertaining to yoga, but also the power of his spiritual force.

Swami Sivananda had a unique style – simple, direct and compelling. His books are not dull treatises on yoga and philosophy, rather his enthusiasm and eagerness to help all is evident in every page, lifting the reader to new heights of understanding.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Sri Swami Sivananda was an embodiment of karma yoga. His life was an illustration of perfection in karma yoga. His teachings on bhakti, jnana or raja yoga were all karma yoga oriented. Hence it has not been easy to 'isolate' his teachings on karma yoga as such.

This volume represents his published work on "The Practice of Karma Yoga', plus extracts from several other works. However, one who studies the other volumes in this series will doubtless get a complete picture of Swamijii's view that karma yoga is the natural outflow of love of God or wisdom of the Self.

PRAYER OF PRAYER OF A KARMA YOGI

O Lord! I do want to serve the world disinterestedly. I am sometimes perplexed, agitated and depressed. I am in a dilemma. I do not know what to do. I have no clear idea of right and wrong. I have no knowledge of the scriptures. I do not know Sanskrit, Laghu nor Siddhanta Kaumudi. I have no training to hear Thy shrill inner voice.

2010 This world is full of apparent contradictions, paradoxes and puzzles, peculiar troubles and difficulties. This world is peculiar. Thou has given me a peculiar mind with peculiar habits. This world is full of temptations. I have no strength to resist temptations, public opinions, criticisms, oppressions, pressures and even assaults. I am not able to please anybody to the fullest extent. Enemies do crop up, though I keep quiet, though I do not interfere with anybody.

O sweet adorable One! Give me strength to control the restless turbulent senses and the mind that ever wanders. Stand behind me always and guide me in every inch of my action. Give me good thoughts. Give me a calm, pure and balanced mind. O Lord, give me light, knowledge and purity. Om. Om. Om

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We are indebted to:

H.H. Sri Swami Venkatesanandaji Maharaj, whose mammoth task was to compile and edit almost 300 of Holy of On Master Sri Swami Sivanandaji's books into 19 volumes, in spite of his demanding programmes and failing health. Buted menings to in a blow

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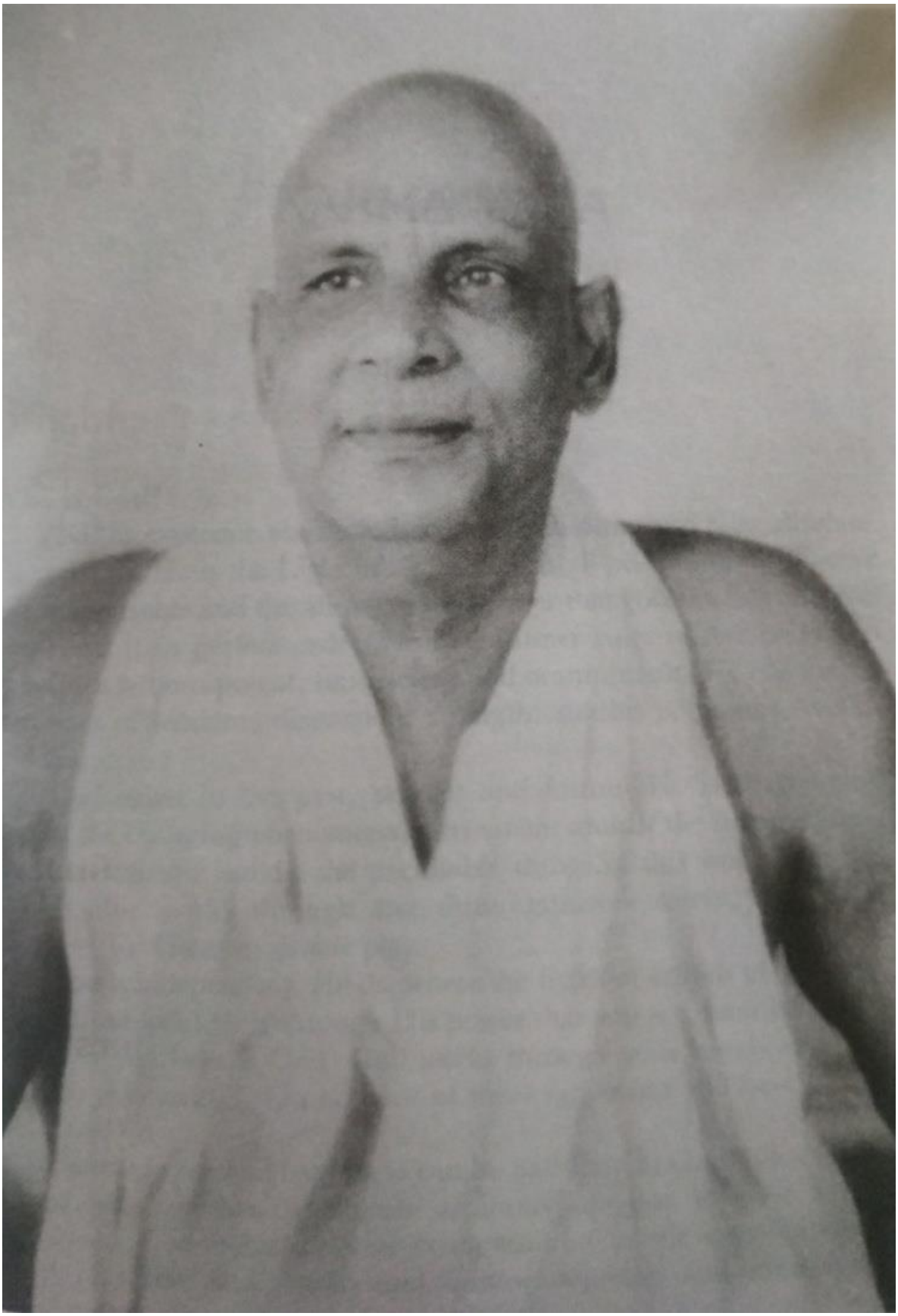
The Publishers



KARMA YOGA

Who is God?

God is existence absolute, knowledge absolute and bliss absolute. He is Truth, He is the Light of lights. God is all-pervading intelligence or consciousness and the all-pervading power that governs this universe and keeps it in perfect order. He is the inner ruler of this body and mind. He is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. He has the six attributes of wisdom, dispassion, strength, siddhis or powers, wealth and fame.

God exists in the past, present and future. He is unchanging amidst the changing phenomena, permanent amidst the impermanent and imperishable amidst the perishable things of this world. He has created this world through the three gunas – sattva, rajas and tamas – for His own divine play.

God is independent. He dispenses the fruits of actions of the jivas. He is all-merciful. It is through His power that you see, hear and talk. Whatever you hear is God. God works through your hands and eats through your mouth. On account of sheer ignorance you have totally forgotten Him.

Eternal peace and happiness can be had only in God. That is the reason why sensible, intelligent aspirants attempt to have God- realisation. God-realisation can bring an end to the ever-revolving wheel of births and deaths and bestow supreme and everlasting happiness on mankind.

This world is really a long, long dream. The five senses delude you at every moment. Open your eyes. Learn to discriminate. Understand His mysteries. Feel His presence everywhere, as well as His nearness. Believe me, He dwells in the chambers of your own heart. He is the silent witness of your mind. He is the holder of the string of your prana. He is the womb for this world and the Vedas. He is the prompter of thoughts. Search for Him inside your heart and obtain His grace. Then alone you have lived your life well. Then alone you are a man. Then alone you are truly wise. Quick, quick, there is not a moment to waste, not a minute to delay. Now is the time. Utilise every moment in spiritual sadhana.

What is Karma?

The word ‘karma’ has several meanings. In a broad sense it means action. It also means duty which one has to perform according to his caste or station of life. Karma means not only action, but also the result of an action. The consequence of an action is not really a separate thing. It is a part of the action and cannot be divided from it. Breathing, thinking, talking, seeing, hearing, eating etc., are karmas. Thinking is mental karma. Karma is the energy which an embodied being generates – be it vital, mental, or moral- which keeps him in the mundane world.

Karma is the sum total of our acts, both in the present life and in the preceding births. It has a deep meaning also. It signifies the destiny or the storehouse of tendencies man which give rise to a man’s future birth.

Any deed or thought that causes an effect is called a karma. Wherever there is a cause, there an effect must be produced. A seed is a cause for the tree which is the effect. The tree produces seeds and becomes the cause for the seeds.

Man is threefold in his nature. He consists of knowing, feeling and willing. These fashion his karma. He knows objects like chair, tree, etc. He feels joy and sorrow. He wills to do this, or not to do that,

Behind the action there are desire and thought. A desire for an object arises in the mind; then you think how to get it and then you exert to possess it. Desire, thought and action always go together. They are the three threads, as it were, that are twisted into the cord of karma.

Desire produces karma. You work and exert to acquire the object of your desire. Karma produces its fruits as pain or pleasure. You will have to take birth after birth to reap the fruits of your karmas. This is the Law of Karma,

Yoga of Service

Karma yoga is the process of right understanding in the performance of action as worship of the Cosmic Being in and through dynamic selfless service of one's fellow beings. It prepares the mind for the reception of light or knowledge, it expands the heart and breaks all barriers that stand in the way of unity or oneness. He who does selfless work becomes a powerful yogi.

A karma yogi knows the secret of work. He develops a strong will and strong character. He does not allow any energy to be frittered away unnecessarily. He knows the science of self-restraint. He conserves and regulates energy and utilises that energy for good purposes that can bring maximum good to a great number of people. This is skill in action which the Bhagavad Gita speaks of in Chapter II.

Every work is a mixture of good and evil. There can be neither absolute good work nor absolute bad work in this world. The physical universe is a relative plane. If you do some action it will do some good in one corner and some evil in another corner. You must try to do such actions that can bring maximum good and minimum of evil. Good work will produce a good effect and bad work will produce a bad effect. But, if you know the secret of work, the technique of karma yoga, you will be absolutely free from the bondage of karma. That secret is to work without any attachment and egoism. The central teaching of the Bhagavad Gita is non-attachment to work.

To You cannot remove completely all evils from this world. Just as in gout and rheumatism the pain and swelling shift from one joint to another, and if one boil is cured another crops up in another place, so also if one evil is eradicated in one place another evil manifests in another place. Social workers pity the lot of young widows and try to arrange widow marriages. They think that they are doing good to the country. But another evil crops up. Difficulty comes in for marrying other girls. They remain unmarried. This is another evil. Social workers try to stop prostitution. This is a laudable work. But as passion is very powerful and uncontrollable, those who cannot afford to marry begin to secretly molest and outrage family ladies. Even legislation cannot stop this evil, Clandestine prostitution takes place vigorously.

This world is very crooked. It is like the tail of a dog. As soon as you take away your hands it will again become crooked. So many yogis, teachers, saints and prophets came into this world and preached. Still it

Is crooked; it is in the same state. Therefore do not bother much about reforming this crooked world. This can never be done. Reform yourself first, then the whole world can be reformed. How can you help the

world when you yourself are weak and ignorant? It will be like a blind man leading another blind man. Both must fall into a deep abyss.

What is the object of service? Why do you serve the poor and needy and suffering humanity at large? Why do you serve society and the country? Service keeps you quite fit and healthy. Service gives you immeasurable joy. Service prepares you to take up vedanta. Service generates unity. Service pleases the gods. Service gives you longevity. Therefore serve, serve, serve with the feeling that everything is the Self. By doing service you purify your heart. Karma yoga is the yoga of action which purifies the heart and prepares the heart and the mind for the reception of divine light or attainment of knowledge of the Self.

The man who serves the world really serves himself. The man who helps others really helps himself. This is another important point. Generally, worldly-minded people are puffed up with pride when they render some help to others. They brag about themselves too much. This world does not want the help of anybody. There is one omnipotent Lord who controls and guides this universe. He can immediately supply a thousand and one Tilaks, Newtons, Shakespeares, Napoleons and Yudhisthiras. When you serve another man, think that God has given you an opportunity to improve, correct and mould yourself by service. Be grateful to that man who gives you a chance to serve.

You will have to serve humanity without any attachment or egoism. Egoism, hatred, jealousy, the idea of superiority and all the kindred negative qualities will vanish. Humility, pure love, sympathy, tolerance and mercy will be developed. The sense of separateness will be annihilated. Selfishness will be eradicated. You will get a broad and liberal outlook on life. You will begin to feel oneness and unity. Eventually you will obtain knowledge of the Self. You will realize 'One in all' and 'all in One'. You will feel unbounded joy.

Bhavana: The Inner Attitude

In the Bhagavad Gita Lord Krishna says:

"As the ignorant men act from attachment, so should the wise act, without attachment, wishing the welfare of the world." (III: 25) Here it is the bhavana or the inner attitude which makes the

Difference. Bhavana is neither imagination nor thought nor feeling, but

The understanding of one's being an expression of such understanding. It is even deeper, stronger and more real than unshakeable conviction

In the practice of karma yoga there are different bhavanas:

1. Samatva-bhavana, the attitude of equanimity, which is characterised by extreme tolerance and patience, an absence of any feeling of grudge or of silent feeling of remorse while doing service. It is working without the consideration, "This is inferior work; that is superior work. I will do this and not that. I will take pleasure even in cleaning latrines." These ideas must be removed.
2. Nimitta-bhavana, the feeling "I am only an instrument in the hands of the Lord." This is the message of Lord Krishna's flute. The flute is just an empty reed yet when Lord Krishna plays, - what heavenly music comes forth!

3. Nishkama-bhavana, or untiring and ungrudging selfless service without expectation of the fruit, or of a reward; non-expectation of thanks or gratitude; giving up the idea "I served him, I helped him," feeling instead, "He gave me an opportunity for service. I am grateful to him."
4. Atma-bhavana (feeling that everything is the Self), or Narayana-bhavana (feeling that the Lord is seated in the heart of everyone whom you serve). Feel that you serve the Lord when you serve anybody. Offer all work as worship of the Lord. Each action is a flower offered to the Lord. Serve the enemy, seeing the Lord in him also.

Give up the feeling of identification with your status in life – e.g. "I am a sannyasin", "I am a karma yogi".

Always scrutinise your inner motives. Rectify errors in bhavana then and there.

Yoga of Equanimity

Worldly people are generally elated by success and depressed by failure. Elation and depression are the attributes of the mind. If you want to become a real karma yogi in the right sense of the term, you will have to keep a balanced mind at all times, in all conditions and under all circumstances. This is no doubt very difficult. But you will have to do it anyhow. Then only will you have peace of mind and real

Lasting happiness. He who keeps a balanced mind is a jnani. Karma yoga prepares the mind for the attainment of jnana. That is the beauty, the secret and essence of karma yoga.

There must not be the least attachment to any kind of work. You must be ready to leave any work at any time. There may be a divine call upon you for certain work. You will have to take it up at once without grumbling, whatever the nature of the work may be, whether you are willing or not. You will have to stop it also, if conditions and circumstances demand you to do so. This is yoga. There is no attachment to the work here.

Many people get attached to the work. They like some kind of work and they take interest in it. They dislike some other kind of work. They are unwilling to leave it also, if conditions want it to be stopped. They take undue responsibility on their shoulders, pine and labour under care, worries and anxieties. This is not yoga at all, because there is attachment to the work owing to the quality of rajas. Worldly people always work with attachment. Hence they suffer. If there is a divine call, you may start a world-wide movement. You must be prepared to stop it at any time if God wills, even though you do not get any success here. It is not your lookout to get success or failure. Simply obey the divine call and act like a soldier on the battlefield. There is great joy in such kind of work because there is no personal element here.

Keep the reason rooted in the Self. Have a poised mind amidst the changes of the world. Work for the fulfilment of purposes divine. Do not expect any fruit. Do everything as an offering to God. Work for the welfare of the world in unison with the Divine Will. Allow the divine energy to work unhampered through your instruments. The moment your egoism comes in, there will be immediate blocking of the free flow of the divine energy. Make your sense organs perfect instruments for God's work. Keep the body-flute hollow by emptying it of your egoism; then Krishna, the flute-bearer of Brindavan, will play freely through this body-flute. He will work through your instruments. Then you will feel the lightness of the work. You will feel that God works through you. You will be washed of all the responsibilities. You will be free as a

bird. You will feel that you are quite a changed being. Your egoism will try to re-enter. Be careful. Be on the alert. By gradual practice and purification of the mind you will become an expert in karma yoga. All your actions will be perfect and selfless. All actions will eventually culminate in jnana. This is the yoga of equanimity

This kind of yoga is inculcated by Lord Krishna in His teachings: "*Perform action, O Dhananjaya, duelling in union with the Divine, renouncing attachments, and balanced evenly in success and failure; equilibrium is yega." Bhagavad Gita (11:48)*

You will have to leave even such subtle attachment as 'May God be pleased'. Work merely for the sake of the Lord. Then even eating, walking, talking, sleeping, breathing and answering calls of nature will become yoga activity. Work becomes worship. This is the great secret. You will have to learn it by gradual practice in the field of karma yoga. You will have to spiritualise all your actions. You will have to transmute all your actions into yoga by practice. Mere theorising will not do. Understand the secrets of karma yoga. Work unselfishly. Become a true karma yogi and enjoy the infinite bliss of the Atman.

Merit and demerit do not affect that karma yogi who has evenness or equanimity of mind, for he neither exalts over the good fruit of the one nor worries over the bad fruit of the other. He has equanimity of mind in success and failure. His mind is always resting in God all the while.

The karma yogi has no attachment to sensual objects. He has purified his mind by constant selfless service. He has given up all idea of agency. He treats the body as an instrument of God, given to him for the fulfilment of His purpose. He attributes all activities to the divine actor within. He who is established in the yoga of equanimity becomes an expert in the science of karma yoga. That is the reason why Lord Krishna says:

"United to the pure reason, one abandons here both good and evil deeds: therefore cleave to yoga; yoga is skill in action." Bhagavad Gita (11:50)

The karma yogi who possesses evenness of mind casts off the fruits of actions. He escapes from good and bad fruits. Clinging to fruit is the only cause of rebirth. When all actions are performed for God's sake in fulfilment of His purpose without desire for fruit, he gets illumination and shakes off the bondage of birth. He attains knowledge of Brahman and through Brahman, jnana or liberation. In the Bhagavad Gita you will find:

"*The sages, united to the pure reason, renounce the fruit which yields action, and, liberated from the bonds of birth, they go to the blissful seat." (II:51)*

Actions which are of a binding nature lose that nature when you do them with equanimity or evenness of mind through the help of pure reason which has lost all attachment to sensual objects, and which is resting in the Self. You will have to cultivate and develop this pure reason and equanimity of mind. God has given this marvellous machine to man for service of humanity and thereby attaining an immortal life. If he uses this body for satisfaction of petty desires and selfish ends he becomes an object of pity and condemnation. He is caught up in the wheel of birth and death. Rest the mind in the Self when you perform any action. He who has developed pure reason and who is resting in the Self is quite aware that all actions are done by the divine actor within. He is perfectly conscious that God really operates in this body-machine and moves this machine.

Nishkama Karma Yoga: Selfless Service

According to the Bhagavad Gita, any action done with nishkama bhav (without attachment or desire for its fruits) is karma yoga. Lord Krishna "Work incessantly. You duty is to work but not to expect the fruits says, thereof." The central teachings of the Bhagavad Gita are non-attachment to work, and self-realisation in and through the world. To serve humanity, God in manifestation, and to think of God while living in the world amidst various activities, is far superior to a life in a cave in seclusion. You will become a real hero indeed.

"Verily, doing works in this world one should wish to live a hundred years. If you live thus as a man, deeds will not cling to you. There is no other way than this." (Isha Upanishad) This is karma yoga presented for those who are not able to become sannyasins.

In practice of nishkama karma yoga, there is no loss of effort. There is no harm. There is no transgression also. Even a little of this knowledge, even a little practice, can protect you from great fear of birth and death with its concomitant evils. In this path of karma yoga you will doubtless reap the fruit of jnana (wisdom). There is no uncertainty here. Matter is indestructible, energy is indestructible. Even a little practice with the right mental attitude will purify the subconscious mind. The impressions of virtuous actions are imbedded in the subconscious mind. They are also indestructible. They are real, valuable assets for you. They will prevent you from doing wrong actions. They will goad you to do selfless actions. They will push you on to the goal. Selfless works will prepare the heart and mind for the reception of the seed of wisdom. The path of karma yoga eventually leads to the attainment of infinite bliss of the Self.

If a man serves you with nishkama bhav and he does not accept any salary, even if he breaks a glass you will say, "Don't bother, it is nothing for me." You excuse him gladly. But if your servant breaks it, you will say, "You have been very careless, I will cut Rs. 10/- from your wages this month." When this is the case in wordly matters, how much more sublime it should be in nishkama karma yoga? Even if you perform wrong acts you will not get their results, because you do not want the fruits of your action. You offer all your acts as offerings unto the Lord.

Serve the Lord in All

Selfless service eradicates egoism, purifies the heart, and leads to the descent of divine Light. It is the yoga of action.

The karma yogi should dedicate his actions at the altar of God. Society is nothing but a collection of units or individuals. The world is nothing but a manifestation of God. Service of humanity and the country is, in fact, nothing short of service of God. Service is worship. But one should serve with the correct inner feeling, then alone can he have quick realisation and purification of the heart.

When a worldly man helps another, he has a feeling that he is superior and the receiver is inferior to him; but in selfless service the aspirant consecrates his work as an offering unto the Lord. He feels that he is serving the Lord. 'Helping' another intensifies egoism. It is tinged with vanity.

When he consecrates his actions at the feet of God he develops devotion to God and approaches nearer and nearer to Him. He gradually feels that God directly works through his senses. He feels no strain or burden in the discharge of his work, and is quite at ease. The heavy load which he felt previously on account of false egoism vanishes out of sight.

A doctor can easily attain Self-realisation if he serves the poor with the right inner attitude and with the right spirit. A doctor who works in the hospital should think that the body is the moving temple of God and that the hospital is a big temple. He should think: "I am doing all my actions to please the Lord and not to please my superiors." He should think that God is the inner ruler, that He alone manipulates all his organs, and that He is the wire-puller of the body. He should think that he works to carry out the Divine Will in the grand plan or scheme of things. He should consecrate all his actions at His feet – whether the actions be good or bad when he retires to bed. This is the fire of wisdom or the fire of devotion that destroys the fruit of action, brings about purity of mind, knowledge of the Self and final emancipation. He should never even dream: "I have done such meritorious acts. I will get an exalted place in heaven, etc. I will be born in the next birth as a rich man."

By means of constant practice of this nature he will slowly get mental non-attachment towards work. When a lady does her household duties she should also entertain the above mental attitude. In this manner all actions can be spiritualised. All actions will become worship of the Lord. A man can realise God-head in whatever situation he may be placed in life, if only he works with the right mental attitude.

Knowledge and Devotion

Only that man who has knowledge and devotion can do really efficient service to the country and the people. Mere philanthropical work out of sympathy, without devotion and knowledge, is nothing more than social scavenging. It is not yoga or worship. It is on a lower plane. It cannot elevate a man much. The progress is dull and slow, if you can call it progress. Remember, it is the mental attitude that does immense good.

A karma yogi who does all work as worship of God in the beginning, who surrenders his body, mind, soul and all his actions as flowers or offerings at the lotus feet of the Lord, who is ever absorbed in the Lord by constant thought of Him, loses himself in God- consciousness by total self-surrender.

Only an Instrument

A bhakta does self-surrender and dedicates all his actions at the lotus feet of the Lord as worship unto Him. He says: "I am an instrument in the hands of my Beloved. I have no individual will. I am Thine, my Lord. All is Thine. Thy will be done. Thou art everything. Even an atom cannot move without Thee. Even a leaf cannot move without Thee. Thou workest through all my organs. Thou speakest through my mouth. I offer to Thee whatever I do or eat. I offer to Thee my tapas and everything. Thou canst do whatever Thou likest. I live for Thee alone. I work for Thee alone. I cannot live without Thee even for a second."

The bhakta gets absorbed in God. His will becomes one with the Cosmic Will. That is the last and most advanced stage. He realizes that whatever is going on in the world is but the lila of the Lord or divine sporting. He feels that he is one with the Lord and that he is a partner in His lila. He lives for Him only. He lives in Him only. His thoughts and actions are now of God Himself. The veil has dropped. The sense of separateness has been totally annihilated. He now enjoys the Divine attributes.

Balance of mind brings about real lasting happiness to a disciplined man. It is not a commodity which can be purchased in the market. It is indeed a rare gift which can only be attained by protracted selfless service with Atma bhav, equal vision, controlled senses and self- restraint; by developing virtues such as adaptability, broad and generous tolerance and a high degree of endurance, serenity, calmness and control of temper; and by removing anxieties, worries, fear and depression by spiritual sadhana and

meditation. It is serenity and balance of mind that can give real, eternal happiness to man. The wealth of the three worlds is nothing when compared to the bliss enjoyed by that great soul who has serenity and a balanced mind. Now, tell me honestly, where is bliss? Who is a great man? Is it in a wealthy king with an unbalanced and unbridled mind, living in a palace; or in a poor saint with a magnificent calm and balanced mind, living in a grass hut on the banks of the sacred Ganges?

Serve, love, give. He who practises these instructions can live through hard times and bad days. Make others truly happy as you strive to make yourself happy. The deeper you meditate and the more willingly you serve, the happier you will be.

SECRETS OF KARMA YOGA

This whole universe is kept up by the force of attachment. A teetotaller just tastes a small peg of champagne when he is caught up in evil company and he becomes an inveterate drunkard through attachment to liquor. A sober man just takes a whiff of Gold-flake (tobacco) and becomes a terrible smoker in a short time through attachment. There is in the mind a gummy substance which is like a mixture of castor oil, glue, mucilage, gum-arabic, gluten paste, honey, glycerine, jack-fruit juice and all other pasty substances of this world. The mind is glued, as it were, to the objects with this mixture. Therefore the attachment is very strong.

Man always thirsts for possession of objects. This possession of objects surely brings selfishness. Selfishness causes attachment. Wherever there is attachment there are 'I-ness' and 'mine-ness'. The wheel has begun to revolve. The man has become a slave now. Strong iron chains are fastened to his hands, knees and legs. He has entangled himself like a spider or a silk-worm. This is his own self-created trouble, brought about through attachment.

A karma yogi must work without attachment. 'I-ness and mine- ness' are the causes for bondage. There is no samsara for you if you are free from 'I-ness' and 'mine-ness'. Never say: "My wife, my son, my house." Attachment is the root cause of all the miseries and troubles of this world. Discipline the mind carefully. The old habits will creep in. Destroy them at the very root. Lead a life of non-attachment. This is the master-key to open the realms of Brahmic bliss. But work incessantly without any attachment, without identification; then alone can you have real happiness. You will feel that you are a different being Karma yoga elevates a man to sublime, magnanimous heights. One should work patiently.

Work cannot bring misery but it is the attachment and identification to work that brings in all sorts of worries, troubles and unhappiness. Understand the secret of karma yoga and work without attachment and identification and you will soon attain God- consciousness. This is jnana, this is the fire of wisdom which burns all the fruits of action.

No meditation or samadhi is possible without a preliminary training in karma yoga. To work without attachment is doubtless a difficult task. It is up-hill work, but it becomes easy and pleasant for a man of patience and determination. You will have to do it at any cost if you want final beatitude and immortality. Everybody will do it, not now, but after taking five hundred births. But the question is, why not now? Cut short the cycle and enjoy supreme bliss right now in this very second, in this birth. That is wisdom.

Do you expect anything from your small son if you do something for him? In a similar manner you will have to work for others also without expecting anything. You will have to expand your heart and think that this whole world is your own Self. It gives you a little pain in the beginning because you have never worked up to this time in this line of selfless and disinterested service.

When you have tasted a bit of the bliss of karma yoga you can never leave it. The force of karma yoga will induce you to work more and more with great zeal and enthusiasm. You will begin to feel that this world is a manifestation of God. You will gain immense inner strength and purity of heart. Your heart will be filled with mercy, sympathy and love. Your spirit of self-sacrifice will grow ad infinitum. Selfishness of all sorts will be annihilated. Those who work in the public field for the welfare of the country and suffering humanity can realise the truth of this statement.

Non-attachment is dispassion or indifference to sensual pleasures of all kinds, herein and hereafter, which is one of the four means of salvation for the aspirant on the path of jnana yoga or vedanta. It is purely a mental state. The binding link is really in the mind. 'T'ness and 'mine'ness are the two poisonous fangs of the mind-serpent. Extract these two teeth and the serpent-mind is tamed. There can be no bondage. It is the mind that creates the ideas of 'I-ness' and 'mine-ness'.

It is the mind that links the jiva with the body, and the man thinks, "I am the body". It is the mind that causes attachment to wife, son and property. If the binding link in the mind is destroyed, you can remain wherever you like. You can roam about peacefully in any part of the world, unattached, like water on the lotus-leaf. Nothing can bind you. The whole mischief is wrought by the mind. A man may rule a vast dominion and yet he can be unattached. Queen Chudalai and Raja Janaka had not a bit of attachment for their wealth and estate. Janaka said: "Even if the whole of Mithila is burnt, nothing of mine will be Jost. Look at the exalted mental state of Janaka! He was resting in his own essential nature. He had not a bit of attachment. The mental state of Chudalai also was the same as that of Janaka. Though Sikhidhvaja, the husband of Chudalai, lived in the forest with just a piece of cloth and a water-pot, his mind was full of attachment. He was attached to his body and his water-pot. A man may be intensely attached to a small piece of cloth or a stick or a small tumbler or to his body, although he has left his family and property. At the time of death the mental pictures of a tumbler or stick only will come to his mind. Jada Bharata was attached to a deer, and the thought of the deer only came to his mind at the time of his death and he had to take birth as a deer. Such is the power of attachment.

Worldly people generally judge the state of dispassion of a sadhu from external conditions. If a sadhu has one piece of cloth and a long beard and matted hair, he is regarded as a first-class mahatma. This man may fight with another sadhu for his share when a pilgrim distributes a few cents to them. His mind may be full of passion and attachment. Householders are deceived. Some hypocrites put on an external show of dispassion just to collect money secretly. Matted hair is ingeniously glued to the head. (There are experts in Benares who do this for two rupees!) Householders should be very cautious and should not be led away by the external physical nudity of some sadhus. What is wanted is mental nudity. The mind must be completely shaved. Then only can there be real non-attachment.

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You should have a deeper interest in whatever actions you perform than a great artist has in his dearly-loved paintings. Observe how every stroke of the brush is preceded by deep deliberation, what one-pointed attention goes into the ever-so minutest touch -the artist's being at the moment is focussed on the painting! That is exactly the secret of karma yoga. To combine this deep interest with perfect detachment constitutes karma yoga. The painter would be depressed if the outcome is not perfect, if his work is not appreciated; the karma yogi, on the other hand, would enjoy the supreme satisfaction of glorious culmination at every stage and would be content with having done his duty. He would not at all

be affected by the result. The success he expects from the work is the work itself, which he has already accomplished!

If work is performed for work's sake, if such work is performed for the sake of the commonweal in a spirit of sacrifice, you will enjoy ineffable peace and a bliss that surpasses description. The gates of the kingdom of God will be thrown open to you. That is what the Lord assures you in the Bhagavad Gita.

To be a perfect karma yogi therefore, you should live in Him and realise that you are an instrument of His will. Whatever is done without this realisation is an act performed in ignorance, an act that would bind you faster to the wheel of samsara.

Feel that God is the Inner Ruler who manipulates your mind, body and senses. Therefore give up the thought 'I am the doer. Feel: 'I am an instrument in His hands. God works through my hands, eats through my mouth and sees through my eyes.'

Just as the tongue is not affected by taking ghee, so also you should remain unaffected even amidst worldly activities and troubles. You must keep the unattached state. This is jnana (wisdom). This is balance. You may fail to keep the balance and unattached state a thousand and one times, but in the long run you are bound to succeed if you persist in your practice and if you discipline the mind properly. Every failure is a pillar for future success. Remember this point well. You will be able to do two things at a time by practice. The manual work will become automatic, mechanical or instinctive. You will have two minds a portion of the mind will be at work while the rest of the mind will be in the service of the Lord, meditation and in japa. Repeat the name of the Lord while at work also.

Ashtavadhanis are people who can do eight things at a time. They play cards, move the man in chess, dictate some passages to a third man, talk to a fourth in order and continuation, and so on. This is a question of training of the mind. Even so you can so train the mind that it can work with the hands and can remember God at the same time. This is karma yoga and bhakti yoga combined.

Lord Krishna says: "*Therefore at all times think upon Me and fight, with mand and reason set on Me, without doubt thou shalt come unto Me"* Gita (VIII:7)

The Lord has given you a rare opportunity to improve, to correct and mould yourself by service. Service of humanity and country is service of God. Service is worship. Never grumble or murmur when you do service to others. Take delight and be ever ready to serve others. Watch for opportunities to serve; never miss a single opportunity. Create an opportunity. Create the field for good service.

Serve society for two hours daily in any way you like with niskama bhav. This will purify your heart. Remember that God is the foundation of society. Remember that the world is the manifestation of the Lord. If you serve with that awareness you will have a changed angle of vision, you will have heaven on earth. It is the mind that is the cause for bondage and liberation.

If you care for the fruits of actions you will be caught up in the wheel of birth and death. You cannot expect to attain immortality or the final beatitude immediately.

The mental state of non-attachment to the fruits of works can be achieved by two ways. The student of vedanta or jnana yoga develops the feeling of being a witness through discrimination and self-analysis. He says: "I am the silent witness of the mental modifications and the works done by the different organs of the body. I am distinct from the body, organs, mind and prana. Nature does everything. The sense- organs

perform their respective functions. I have nothing to do. I am quite indifferent. I do not want any fruits. This world is impermanent and unreal. There is no real happiness in this world. There are countless defects in worldly life. There is supreme, eternal, infinite bliss in the Atman within. In reality I am satchidananda Atman. I will utilise the senses, mind, prana and body as my instruments for the well-being of the world. This whole world is my own Atman. It is my body. This whole universe is my horne. The Atman is non-doer, it is without movement, without limbs and free from worldly activities." He does constant enquiry and reflection in this manner and gets himself established in his own essential nature. He burns the results of his actions in the fire of wisdom by reflecting in the above manner.

Remove Separateness

The sense of separateness is a colossal fetter. Kill this sense of separateness by developing unity of consciousness and by means selfless service. This sense of separateness is an illusion created by ignorance. Just as a mother who has lost nine children loves the only surviving son dearly, so also you will have to develop boundless love for all beings. This is the first and foremost qualification for an aspirant. The astral body of one who has this boundless love will shine with magnificent brilliance and lustre. There will be a glow of ineffable splendour.

He who ignores his own pleasures and comforts and tries to help others always, is really an advanced student in the path of spirituality. He carries the master-key to unlock the realms of spiritual bliss.

Develop keen enthusiasm for disinterested, selfless service. Be kind to all. Love all. Serve all. Be tolerant and generous towards all. Serve the Lord in all. That is the way to reach the goal.

All Actions Are Sacred

Many aspirants of the present day prefer to do some pleasant work some writing, some collection of flowers for puja, arranging books in the library, some type-writing, some kind of supervision and management work, etc. They dislike works such as drawing water and hewing wood, cleaning dirty utensils, washing clothes, sweeping, cooking, cleaning bed-pans and nursing the sick. They consider these works as menial. They have not tried to understand the real spirit of karma yoga and vedanta. They need vigorous discipline and training. Then alone they will become real aspirants, then alone they will be ready for the commencement of meditation.

In the west, cobblers and peasants have risen to very great positions in society. Every work is respectable work for them. A boy polishes the shoes and boots of the passerby in the streets of London for a penny; he sells newspapers and journals in the afternoon and works as an apprentice under a journalist during his leisure hours at night. He studies books, works hard, never wastes a minute and in a few years becomes a journalist of great repute and international fame. In the Punjab some university graduates have taken to the work of hair- dressing. They have understood the dignity of labour.

He who has understood the right significance of karma yoga will take every work as yogic activity or worship of the Lord. There is no menial work in his vision. In the light of karma yoga all actions are sacred. Only that aspirant who always takes immense delight in doing works which are considered by the worldly man as menial services, and who always does such acts willingly, will become a dynamic yogi. He will be

absolutely free from conceit and egoism. He will have to downfall. The canker of pride cannot touch him. If you create interest in work which the mind revolts against, you later like to do any kind of work. By so doing, you will undoubtedly develop your will-power

Real Service

If you want to truly serve another man, you should try to please him in all respects. You should not do anything that pleases you only You should do such actions as can bring him immense happiness Never, never say "I have helped this man." Feel: 'That man has given me an opportunity to serve. This service has helped me to purify the mind. I am extremely grateful to him.' This will constitute real service But generally, under the camouflage of serving others, people try to please themselves only. This is a serious mistake. He who gives the handle of a sharp knife to another to hold, holding the sharp blade himself, does real service.

A real karma yogi rejoices in suffering. He takes on his shoulders the most responsible, difficult, arduous and uninteresting of works and kills his own little self. He willingly undergoes pain and suffering in order to serve and please others.

Just close your eyes and think of how many times a day you have allowed the fullest play for your selfishness. Make a note of this in your diary. You will be astounded at your own spiritual state. Searching analysis will reveal to you the subtle forms that selfishness assumes. You must gradually endeavour to eradicate all these. Some people imagine that they have reached very near perfection. They feel that there is only a hair's breadth to the attainment of God-realisation. They only close their eyes and dream, for in their everyday life you will find them full of selfishness, full of egoism and all evil qualities.

To stop the breath by means of kumbhaka for two hours, to twirl the beads for twenty-four hours, to sit in samadhi for forty days in an underground cellar without food (by cutting the frenum linguae of the tongue and practising khechari mudra), to stand up on one leg in the scorching heat of the summer sun, to do tratak on the sun at midday, to chant OM, OM, OM in silent and sequestered jungles, to shed an ocean of tears while doing sankirtan all these are of no avail unless one combines burning love for Him in all beings and a fiery spirit of service in serving Him in all beings. Aspirants of the present day are sadly lacking in these two indispensable qualifications. And that is the reason why they do not make any headway at all in their meditation in solitude. They have not prepared the ground, the heart and mind, by protracted practise of love and service in the beginning. I have seen several bhaktas in all my experiences of life in this line bhaktas who wear half a dozen rosaries around their necks and wrists, and mutter Hare Rama Hare Krishna day in and day out, with a long japa mala in their hands. These bhaktas will never approach a sick man even when he is in a dying condition and give him a drop of water or milk, and ask: "What do you want, brother? How can I serve you?" Out of curiosity they will be just looking at him from a distance. Can you call these people true bhaktas? Can there be an iota of real benefit in their meditation or chanting? A living God in the form of a sick patient is in a dying state, yet they have not got the heart to go and serve him or even to speak a few kind and encouraging words at a critical juncture, when his life is trembling in the balance! How can they expect to have darshan of that all-merciful God when they have hearts made of flint? How can they hope for God-realisation when they have not the see God in all beings and the spirit of service to serve Him in all these forms? Eyes to

The spirit of service must be ingrained in you. It must be innate or inherent in you. There should not be a mere show. If you do not possess this spirit, you cannot have success in vedanta, raja yoga or bhakti. Therefore cultivate freely this spirit of service. Sankara, Jesus, Buddha and Mohammad served. Janaka and Samartha Ramdas served. Selfless service is not an enemy of vedanta. Karma yoga will not bind you. Karma yoga purifies the heart and prepares the mind for the dawn of knowledge (jnana).

Work Without Motive

People have various motives when they work. Some work in society for getting name and fame; some work for getting money; some work for getting power; some work for getting enjoyments in heaven. Some build temples with the idea that their sins will be washed off; some do certain sacrifices for getting a son; some dig tanks with the motive that their names will be remembered even after they die. Some make beautiful gardens for the use of the public with the idea that they will enjoy such lovely gardens in heaven; some do charity with the motive that they will be born as rich landlords in the next birth.

Actions are judged only by intentions or motives. It is the selfish motive that binds a man. Work unselfishly with disinterested spirit. Always scrutinise your motives. Your motive should be pure. The fruits young of actions vary according to the motive. Listen to this story: In Hanuman Ghat two girls were in a drowning condition. Two my men jumped immediately into the Ganges and rescued them. One man asked the girl to marry him. The other man said: “I have done duty. God gave me an opportunity to serve and improve myself.” He had purity of mind. The external action was the same (the act of saving the life) but the motive was different. The fruits also must be different. Never care for the fruits of your actions, but do not become a victim of sloth or inertia. Pour forth all your energies in the service of humanity, country, etc. Plunge yourself in selfless service.

When the thought of doing good to others becomes part and parcel of your very being, then you will not entertain any motive at all. You will take immense delight in serving others, in doing good to others. There is a peculiar joy and bliss in vigorous selfless service. You will get inner spiritual strength and power by performing motiveless and selfless actions.

A karma yogi should not expect even return of love, appreciation, gratitude or admiration from the people whom he is serving.

Burn your incense, wave your lights, offer your flowers in the form of cloth, food, medicine, education and shelter. Nurse the sick and serve the poor with the feeling that you are serving the divine. Educate the illiterate. Help in villages and slums. This will purify your heart, this will lead to the descent of divine grace. This will lead you to God- realisation. Be sincere and earnest, friend. Take up this work now. Delay not; tarry not.

The Mind to God: The Hands to Work

Fix your mind at the lotus feet of the Lord. Give the hands to work. Even when you work, work like the typist or the harmonium player who types or plays while talking to you, like the woman who knits and talks at the same time. Let your mind be ever attached to the lotus feet of the Lord while your hands are at work. The mind of the girl who has the water-pot on her head is on the pot, even though she talks and

jokes with her comrades while walking along the road. A cowherd while he is looking after the cows of other people has his mind fixed on his own cow. Even so, have your mind fixed at the lotus feet of the Lord while you are doing your household duties and office work. Though the cow grazes in the pasture having been separated from the calf, her mind is always fixed on the calf only. Similarly you should fix the mind on God when you do japa, and give your hands to work, which is only worship of the Lord. Renounce all attachment. You will realise God quickly.

Remain unattached in the world like the cowherd or the nurse who looks after the child in a rich man's house. The cowherd takes the cows to the pasture for grazing and in the evening simply hands them over to the proprietor. Nothing more than this. He is not affected even if ten cows die of foot-and-mouth disease. The ayah also fondles the child, nurses the child all the twenty-four hours. But when the time of separation comes in, when she leaves the service, she is not affected by the separation.

Just as the water remains unaffected on the lotus leaf, just as the oil floats upon the surface of the water without being affected in any way, so also you should remain in the world amidst troubles, pleasures and difficulties.

Be balanced in success or failure, gain or loss, victory or defeat, pleasure or pain. Train and discipline your mind cautiously. This is your master-key to open the doors of the realms of bliss. This is the secret of karma yoga. This is the secret of success in yoga. Here is also another interesting illustration. The mind of the nurse is always on her own child though she fondles and caresses the child of her employer for the time being. The mind of the bride is always on her husband though she is busy doing her household duties at her home. Even so, fix the mind at the lotus feet of the Lord and give the hands to worldly activities. You can realize God even while remaining in the world if you adopt this method. You need not retire to Himalayan caves and forests. That is the reason why Lord Krishna says: *"Renunciation and yoga of action both lead to the highest bliss; of the two, yoga of action is verily better than renunciation of action." Bhagavad Gita (V:2)*

Purity of Mind

You will have to train the mind to work disinterestedly. You will have to discipline the mind with patience and perseverance. Worldly- minded people cannot understand the spirit of nishkama service as their minds are charged or saturated with impurities. Do service for some time. Then you will grasp the spirit of nishkama karma yoga. In the beginning all your actions may be selfish, but if you work hard in the field of karma yoga for two years, five of your actions will be unselfish and ninety-five will be selfish. Scrutinise your motives, purify them and try hard. After some years of incessant struggle, fifty actions will become unselfish. A good time will come when all your actions, hundred per cent, will be purely unselfish. You will become a perfect karma yogi like Rajah Janaka. The time is not very far if you keep up the ideal before you daily and struggle hard to reach the ideal, and if you are sincere and earnest in your purpose.

Karma yoga should be practised till the end of life. It is an 'ever ready-polish' to keep the mind clean and pure, to keep the body ever active and healthy. A vedantin, a raja yogi and a bhakta should never say "I have transcended karma yoga. There is no necessity for karma yoga for me now." Tamas is ever ready to invade the body and mind. Karma yoga keeps all yogis ever dynamic and alert. It relaxes the mind for

meditation, inspires, gives a change and induces vigorous meditation. (You cannot meditate nor do japa for 24 hours at a time.) Work acts as an appetizer for meditation and wisdom.

Through the practise of karma yoga alone, you can develop virtues such as tolerance, mercy, kindness, love, patience, self-restraint, etc., which are necessary for the practice of bhakti and jnana yoga. How can a cave-dweller in seclusion practise tolerance, mercy and cosmic love? The practice of karma yoga generates, waters and nourishes the virtues. Minus karma yoga they will dwindle and fade away. It acts as a brush to keep the mind-mirror ever clean. It destroys jealousy, hatred, malice, idea of superiority. There is indescribable joy in the practice of karma yoga. A dry vedantin and dry bhakta have no idea of this joy.

The mind is filled with purity if you work without expectation of fruits, if you work for the sake of God, if you regard work as worship, if you dedicate all your actions to God as the indweller of all. Feel and think that you breathe, live and work for God alone every second of your life, and that, without Him, life is absolutely useless. Feel the pangs of separation while at work if you forget Him even for a fraction of a second.

Karma Yoga and Self-knowledge

Knowledge of the Self dawns in a pure mind. Knowledge of the Self is the only direct means to freedom. As cooking is not possible Secrets of Karma Yoga without fire, so is emancipation not possible without knowledge of the Self. Karma cannot destroy ignorance because they are not hostile to each other. But knowledge certainly destroys ignorance as light destroys the densest darkness.

You will find in the Mahabharata: "*Knowledge springs in men on the destruction of sinful karma when the self is seen in the Self, as in a clear mirror."* Santi Parva: (204:8)

In the following passages karma yoga is pointed out as a means to the attainment of knowledge of the Self:

"*The brahmanas seek to know this (Atman) by the study of the Vedas, by yajna or worship."* Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (4-5-22)

"But without yoga, O mighty-armed, renunciation is hard to obtain." Bhagavad Gita (V:6)

"*Having abandoned attachment, yogins perform action for the purification of the self."* Bhagavad Gita (V:11)

"Sacrifice, gift and also austerity are the purifiers of the wise." Bhagavad Gita: (XVIII:5)

Qualifications of a Karma Yogi

The fundamentals of all yogas are the same throughout. An aspirant in any path of yoga should have faith, energy, cheerfulness, courage, patience, perseverance, sincerity, purity, lack of despondency of mind, dispassion, aspiration, concentration, serenity, self-restraint, truthfulness, non-violence, non-covetousness, etc.

"*One who aspires to be a karma yogi should be balanced in success or failure, gain or loss, victory or defeat. He must be free from likes and dislikes."* Bhagavad Gita (XVIII:23)

A karma yogi should be absolutely free from lust, greed, anger and egoism. Even if there are traces of these defects, he should try to remove them. He should not expect any kind of fruits for his actions herein and hereafter. He should not have any desire for name and fame, approbation, appreciation, thirst for applause, admiration and gratitude. He must have a spotless character. He should try to possess this gradually. He should be humble and free from hatred, jealousy, harshness, etc. He should always speak sweet words. How can a proud and jealous man, who expects respect and honour from others, serve others? He should be absolutely fearless. A timid man is absolutely unfit for karma yoga. He is fit to assist his wife in cleaning utensils in the kitchen in the morning and in washing her clothes in the evening.

A man who is easily irritated and who can be easily offended over trifling things is absolutely unfit for the path of karma yoga. A karma yogi should have an amiable, loving, sociable nature. He should be able to move and mix with everybody without distinction of caste, creed or colour. He should have perfect adaptability, mercy and cosmic love. He should be sympathetic and tolerant. He should be able to adjust himself to the habits and ways of others. He should have an all-embracing and all-inclusive heart. He should always have a cool and balanced mind. He should have presence of mind also. He should have equal vision and rejoice in the welfare of others. He should have all the organs under perfect control. He should burn his selfishness to the very root. Let me remind you once more of the words of the Bhagavad Gita: "*Restraining and subduing the senses, regarding everything equally, rejoicing in the welfare of all, those also come to Me." (XII:4)*

A karma yogi should have a sound, healthy and strong physical body. How can he serve others if he has a poor physique and a dilapidated frame? He should take great care of the body, but he should not have the least attachment for it. He should never say: "This body is mine." Even the jackals and fish claim: "Your body is ours." He should be ever ready to sacrifice his body for a noble cause. He should do regular pranayama, physical exercise and asanas to keep up a high standard of health. He should take good, nourishing and substantial food.

A karma yogi should bear insult, disrespect, dishonour, harsh words, censure, infamy, disgrace, heat and cold, and the pain of diseases. He should have power of endurance. He should have absolute faith in himself, in God, in the scriptures and in the words of his guru. Such a man only can become a good karma yogi; such a man only can do real and useful service to the country and to suffering humanity. It is always difficult to find an ideal seeker.

Even if you possess a few of the above qualifications, the other qualifications will come to you by themselves if you earnestly work in the field of karma yoga. You need not be discouraged. Plunge yourself into the service of God. Forget the body. March boldly in the field with love and faith. Have the feeling: I must become a karma yogi now'. All virtues will cling to you by themselves. Apply yourself diligently right now from this very second.

Start the work even with a little capital of some love, mercy and sympathy. Enter the field at once. You will draw inspiration from the leaders in the field. The astral or invisible helpers and your colleagues will push you on. After some time you will become a wonderful karma yogi. Fearlessness, humility and all other virtues will shine in you by themselves.

Expectation Brings Bondage

"*Thy right is to work only, but never to its fruits; let not the fruits of action be thy motive, nor let thy attachment be to inaction." Bhagavad Gita (II:47)*

When you perform actions have no desire for the fruits thereof under any circumstances. If you thirst for the fruits of your actions you will have to take birth again and again to enjoy them. Action done with expectation of fruits brings bondage. If you do not thirst for them, you get purification of heart. This will give you knowledge of the Self, and through knowledge of the Self you will be freed from the round of births and deaths. Neither let your attachment be towards non-action, thinking "What is the use of doing actions when I cannot get any reward for them?"

"*Do thou perform thy bounden duty, for action is superior to inaction and even the maintenance of the body would not be possible for thee by inaction." Bhagavad Gita (III:8)*

Living itself involves several natural and unavoidable actions which have to be performed by all. It is ignorance to say, "I can live doing nothing." If work is performed with evenness of mind with the mind resting in the Lord, it will not bind; it will not bring any fruit; it is no work at all. Actions which are of a binding nature lose that nature when performed with equanimity of mind, or poised reason.

He who performs actions for the sake of God in fulfilment of His purpose, without desire for the fruits, is released from the bonds of birth and attains to the blissful seat of the Immortal abode.

Restlessness Creates Selfishness

The mind is so framed that it cannot think of any kind of work without remuneration or reward. This is due to restlessness. Human nature is always like this. When discrimination dawns, when the mind is filled with some more sattva or purity, this nature changes slowly The spirit of selflessness slowly creepes in.

The quality of restlessness creates selfishness and attachment. A selfish man has no large heart. He has no ideal. He is petty-minded and full of greed. He always calculates. He cannot do any service in a magnanimous manner. He will say: "I will get so much money. I must put forth so much work only." He will weigh the work and money in a balance. He cannot do a little more work. He is actuated by the hope of reward. He is greedy for gain. Selfless service is unknown to him. He has no idea of God, he has no glimpse of Truth. He cannot imaginea an expanded, selfless life. He has got into a narrow, circumscribed circle or groove. He dwells within this small groove. His love extends to his own body, his wife and children – that is all. Generosity is unknown to him.

Half-hearted service is no service at all. Give your whole heart, mind and soul when you serve. This is very important when you practise karma yoga. Some people have their body in one place, mind in another place and soul in another place. That is the reason why they do not realise any substantial progress in the path.

Forget not the goal of life amidst selfish activities. The goal of life is Self-realisation. Are you attempting to reach the end and aim of life? Are you doing japa, pranayama and meditation? Have you kept up the ideal before the mind's eye? That day in which you do not practise any spiritual sadhana is wasted. Give

the mind to God and the hand to work. You will have to analyse and scrutinise your motives. It is the selfish motive and not the work itself that binds a man to samsara. Prepare the mind for karma yoga. Mere selfish work cannot be taken as yoga activity. The mind always expects something. When you smile you expect a return of smile from your friend. When you raise your hand in salutation, you expect a salute from other people. Even when you give a cup of water to another man, you expect him to be grateful to you. When such is the case, how can you perform nishkama karma yoga?

Think that your hands are the hands of Lord Siva. In the beginning some of your actions may be selfish and some may be unselfish. In the long run you can do all actions in an unselfish manner. Scrutinise your motives always. This is the keynote for nishkama karma yoga. Every act can be spiritualised when the motives become pure. Work is meditation. Serve everyone with intense love without any idea of agency, without expectation of fruits or reward. If you adopt the path of jnana, feel you are a silent witness and that nature does everything.

It is selfishness that has deplorably contracted your heart. Selfishness is the bane of society. Selfishness clouds understanding Selfishness is petty-mindedness. Enjoyment increases selfishness and selfish nature. It is the root-cause for human sufferings. Real spiritual progress starts in selfless service. Serve the sadhus, sannyasins, bhaktas and poor sick persons with feeling, divine love and devotion. Feel that the Lord is seated in the hearts of all.

God dispenses the fruits of actions according to the motive. If the motive is pure you will get divine grace and purity. If the motive is impure you will get rebirth to reap the fruits of your actions. Again you will do virtuous and vicious actions through the force of likes and dislikes. You will be entrapped in the never-ending wheel of birth and death.

However, you should not remain in a state of inertia also, thinking that you will not get the fruits if you work selflessly. You must not say: “What is the use of my work now? I can’t get any fruits. I will keep quiet.” This is also bad. You will become lazy and dull. There will be mental inactivity. You will get purity of mind if you work in the spirit of karma yoga. Serve any society, ashram, math or religious institution for two hours daily in any way you like with a feeling of nishkama bhava. This will purify your heart. Remember that God is the foundation of the society. Remember that the whole world is the manifestation of the Lord. Earth is God. Milk is God. Tree is God. If you see God in all whom you serve, you will have a changed angle of vision. You will have heaven on earth.

You cannot imagine the exalted condition of a man of pure mind. He has unbounded peace, strength and joy. He is very near God. He is dear to God. He will soon receive the divine light. Work without any sort of motive and feel its effects of purity and inner strength. What an expanded heart you will have! Indescribable! Practise, feel and enjoy this state.

“The Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings, O Arjuna, and by His illusive power, causes all beings to revolve as though mounted on a potter’s wheel.” Bhagavad Gita (XVIII:61)

The spirit of service must be deeply ingrained in your very bones, cells, tissues and nerves. The reward is invaluable. Practise and feel the cosmic expansion and infinite bliss. Tall talk and idle gossiping will not do, my dear friends. Evince intense zeal and enthusiasm for work. Be fiery in the spirit of service.

You will be able to do two things at a time through gradual practice. Repeat the name of the Lord while at work. Karma yoga is generally combined with bhakti yoga. A karma yogi offers to the Lord as an oblation whatever he does through the organs of actions.

In the beginning, all your actions may not be pure. Some may be with expectation. You must be very vigilant in scrutinising your motives during action. You must be ever introspective. By and by when the heart becomes purer and purer through constant work, your actions will be perfectly disinterested and selfless.

You must learn the secret of renunciation or the abandonment of the fruits of action. Long is the lesson, toilsome the practice. You have to combine energy in work, with indifference to the result of the work

If you really want to grow in the spiritual path you must do all sorts of service daily till the end of the life. Then only you are safe. Do not stop doing service when you have become a famous yogi. Is there any greater vedantin or karma yogi than Lord Buddha? He still lives in our hearts, because the spirit of service was ingrained in him and he spent his whole life in serving others in a variety of ways. He was indeed a magnanimous soul, one without a second. You can also become a Buddha if you apply yourself diligently to selfless service with the right mental attitude.

Kill ambition, kill desire for life, kill desire for comfort. Work as those work who are ambitious. Respect life as do those who desire it. Be happy as those who live for happiness. The reconciliation of these opposites is the secret of renunciation.

All who seek power, life or comfort perform actions with a view to obtaining and enjoying these fruits, and they direct their activities to this end. The fruit is the motive for exertion, and the longing for it inspires the effort.

Aspirants must work as energetically as the children of this world, but they must substitute a new motive; they work that the divine law may be fulfilled, that the divine purpose may be promoted, that the will of God may be carried out in every direction. This is the new motive and it is one of the all-compelling forces; they work for God alone. Thus acting they create no karma-bond, for it is desire that

Binds. Now, the attainment of renunciation is difficult and requires prolonged and patient practice. The probationer must remember that much of his work consists of practising the precepts laid down by all earnest religious leaders. He will begin by trying to be careless of the results brought to him personally by his actions; he will try to do his very best and then rid himself of all feeling as to the reaction on himself, taking equally whatever comes. If success follows, he will check the feeling of elation; if failure, he will not permit depression to master him. Persistently he will repeat his efforts, until by slow degrees he finds that he is beginning to care little for rewards (or falls), while he has lost no whit of his energy and is painstaking in his actions. He will not seek external activities, but will do his best with every duty that comes in his way. He will begin to show the balanced state of mind which marks the crowning strength and detachment of the soul.

He will hasten the attainment of these through a cool estimation of the value of the earth's so-called prizes, meditating on their transitory nature, the anxiety and unrest of those whose hearts are fixed on them, the emptiness of them when finally grasped and held and the satiety that follows close on the heels of possession. The intellectual appreciation of them will come to his help in disappointment and restrain

him in success, and so aid him in giving more equilibrium. Here is a field of daily effort which will demand his energies for years.

No Loss In Karma Yoga

You do not lose anything in karma yoga. Even if you do a little service to the country or to society or to poor sick people, it brings its own advantage and benefits. It purifies your heart and prepares the mind and heart for the reception of knowledge of Atma. The impressions of these good actions are indelibly imbedded in your subconscious mind. The force of these impressions will again propel you to do some more good actions. Sympathy, love and the spirit of patriotism and service will be developed. Nothing is lost when the candle burns.

Study the autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi. He never made any difference between menial service and dignified work. Scavenging and cleaning of the latrine was the highest yoga and worship for him. He himself cleaned latrines. He annihilated this illusory little T through service of various sorts. Many highly educated persons joined his ashram to learn yoga under him. They thought that Gandhiji would teach them yoga in some mysterious manner in a private room and would give lessons on pranayama, meditation, abstraction, awakening of kundalini etc. They were disappointed when they were asked to clean the latrine first. They left the ashram immediately. Gandhiji himself repaired his shoes. He himself used to grind flour, and he took upon his shoulders the work of others also when they were unable to do the allotted portion of work for the day in the ashram. When an educate person, a new ashramite, felt shy to do grinding work, Gandhiji would willingly do his work in front of him and then the man would do the work himself from the next day.

The karma yogi should understand the secret of karma yoga. H should plunge himself incessantly in selfless work. He should nurse people with Atma bhav and serve society in a variety of ways Gradually he will understand the glory and splendour of unselfish work. He will become a changed being with divine effulgence and sweet fragrance. Many of his actions may be selfish in the beginning. It does not matter. He should not be discouraged on this score. But slowly, when he grows in purity, some of his actions will turn out to be unselfish. In the long run all his actions will be unselfish. He should patiently work with indefatigable energy. He has to destroy his old mind full of selfishness and build a new mind of selflessness. This is doubtless up-hill work. This demands struggle and constant effort with assiduous patience and iron determination.

Look at the stupendous and magnanimous work turned out by Lord Buddha, Sri Sankara and other karma yogis of yore. Their names are still remembered. The whole world worships them with reverence. Can you attribute an iota of selfish motive to their actions? They lived for doing service to others. They were examples of absolute self-abnegation.

Expand. Purify your heart. Live in the true spirit of karma yoga. Live every second for the realization of the ideal and goal of life. Then and then alone will you realize the true glory of karma yoga. Keep before you the examples of the great karma yogis who served mankind and thus radiated peace, bliss and wisdom unto all.

Work is worship. Work is meditation. If you serve all with intense love without any idea of agency and without expectation of fruits or reward, you will realise God. Service of humanity is service of God.

The practice of karma yoga does not require much wealth. It demands a willing heart to serve humanity.

An advocate can plead for poor people without accepting any fees This is karma yoga for him. A teacher or a professor can give free tuition for poor boys and supply them with free books. This is karma yoga for him. A doctor can serve the poor without any fees and give them medicine free. This is karma yoga for the doctor.

If you find a poor man suffering on the roadside, take him on your back and admit him in the hospital; serve and nurse the poor sick persons who live in your neighbourhood. Go to the hospital and serve the sick persons with a loving heart. Pray for their speedy recovery. Study the Bhagavad Gita in their presence. Acts of this description will purify your heart and make you feel and recognise the oneness of all beings. Then you will smile with the rose, converse with the trees, running brooks and mountains. Even if you do one noble act without any tinge of selfishness as an offering unto the Lord, it will purify your heart, turn your mind at once towards the Lord and qualify you for the reception of divine light and divine grace.

Work elevates when done in the right spirit without attachment or egoism. If you are a bhakta (devotee), feel you are an instrument in the hands of God. If you adopt the path of jnana, feel that you are a silent witness and that nature does everything. All work is sacred. There is no menial work from the highest viewpoint (from the viewpoint of the Absolute, from the viewpoint of karma yoga). Even scavenging, when done with the right mental attitude as described above, will become a yoga activity for God-realisation.

Selfless work elevates and brings freedom. Selfish work retards spiritual progress and fastens one more chain to your feet. If you find it difficult to work without any motive, have one strong motive for freedom when you work. This will not bind you. This will destroy all other lower selfish motives and will eventually die by itself, just as the stick used in burning a dead body burns the dead body and is itself consumed in the end. The joy of a developed karma yogi is really unbounded. Words cannot adequately describe his exalted state and inner happiness.

Service of the Guru

Service of your guru or a mahatma is the highest form of karma yoga. This will purify your heart quickly. Contact with a great soul or guru has immediate advantages. If you serve a mahatma or your guru you will be benefited by the magnetic aura of the great personage. You will draw inspiration from him. You will gradually imbibe his virtuous qualities. If one lives with his guru he must be prepared to willingly do any work assigned to him. Many foolishly think that one drop of water from the kamandalu of a sannyasin or yogi, or a small magic pill, will transmute them into divinities, will awaken the kundalini and put them into samadhi within the twinkling of an eye. They themselves do not wish to do any kind of sadhana. They expect that the guru should do everything for them They want the ‘master’s touch’ or ‘influence’. Queer people indeed. With strange preposterous ideas!

You can know the unknowable Brahman through purity of mind by serving the guru who is established in Brahman, by getting lessons from him and by practising constant meditation.

If you remain in the company of a developed saint you will be immensely benefited by his magnetic aura and spiritual currents. His company will be like a fortress for you. You will not be affected by evil influences. There is no fear of a downfall. You can have rapid spiritual progress. The company of a saint

hastens remarkably the growth of sattvic virtues in the aspirant and gives him strength to awaken the dormant powers and to eradicate undesirable negative qualities and various defects.

An aspirant should follow the instructions of his guru and the teachings of the scriptures to the very letter. No leniency should be allowed to the mind. There can be no half measures in the spiritual path. You cannot say: "I will see to them later on. I can devote more time when I retire. I have followed the instructions as far as possible or more or less." This 'more or less' and 'as far as possible' business is disastrous to an aspirant. There is neither 'exception to the general rule' nor 'allowing margin' nor any 'discount' in the practice of spiritual instructions. Exact, implicit, strict obedience to the instructions is expected of you.

Young aspirants should remain in the company of their gurus or saints till they are firmly moulded or established in the spiritual path and in deep meditation. In these days many young aspirants wander aimlessly from place to place and do not want to hear the instructions of their teachers or experienced saints. Hence they do not make any progress in spirituality. They remain as burdens on society. They have not elevated themselves. They are of no use to others also. They are free gentlemen at large.

Generally people are impatient and they expect siddhis after doing a little service. The real karma yogi who serves people with humility and Atma bhav (seeing God in every face) becomes a real ruler of the world. He is honoured and respected by all. The more service a man does with Atma bhay, the more power, energy and capacity he will get one should practise and feel this.

May you all attain purity of heart through constant selfless service. May you all shine as dynamic karma yogis radiating joy, peace and bliss everywhere. May you all rejoice in the welfare of all beings. May your minds be fixed on the Lord while your hands are in the service of humanity. May you all understand the principles and techniques of karma yoga. May all your actions become offerings unto the Lord. May you all attain liberation in this very birth.

Health and Yoga

What is health? It is a state of equilibrium of the three humours of the body, viz., vata, pitta and kapha (wind, bile and phlegm), wherein the mind and all the organs of the body work in harmony and concord, and the man enjoys peace and happiness and performs his duties of life with comfort and ease. It is that condition in which man has a good digestion and a good appetite, normal breathing and pulse, a good quantity and quality of blood, strong nerves and a calm mind, a sound mind in a sound body, a free movement of bowels, normal state of urine, rosy cheeks, shining face and sparkling eyes. It is that state in which a man jumps, sings, smiles, laughs, whistles and moves about hither and thither with joy and ecstasy. It is that condition in which he can think properly, speak properly and act with alacrity, nimbleness and vigilance.

This desirable state is coveted by all. A life with good health is a great blessing indeed. What is the use of wealth and possessions if a man cannot eat well on account of disease of the stomach, if he cannot walk on account of rheumatism or paralysis, if he cannot see the beautiful scenery of nature on account of cataract or any defective vision, if he cannot copulate on account of impotency. A great thinker said: "Give me health and a day: I will make the pomp of emperors ridiculous." Life without good health is a miserable condition, even if one is the Lord of the whole earth.

Man enjoys good health on account of good karmas done in his previous birth. He who has done meritorious service in his previous incarnation, he who has shared what he had with others, he who has helped the poor and the needy, he who has done worship, meditation, yoga kriyas and pranayama in his previous birth, enjoys sound health in this birth. The law of causation is inexorable and unrelenting.

What is the greatest thing that a man can achieve in this world? It is Self-realisation. What are the advantages or benefits of Self. Realisation? Why should we attempt to achieve Self-realisation at all? The attainment of Atma jnana or realisation of the identity of the jiva (individual soul) and Brahman (supreme soul) can alone put an end to the wheel of birth and death with its concomitant evils of disease, old age, pain, suffering, worries and various other sorts of trouble. It is this alone that can give you unalloyed eternal bliss, supreme peace, highest knowledge and immortality.

The next question is, why should we have good health? We should have good health in order that we may achieve the four kinds of purushartha – righteousness, wealth, desires and liberation. If you do virtuous deeds you will get wealth and you can gratify your worldly desires. Then you can attempt realisation of the Self. Without good health you cannot achieve anything. Without good health you cannot perform any service without expectation of fruits. Without good health you cannot do asanas and pranayama. That is the reason why scriptures declare that this body is a boat to cross the ocean of worldly existence, an instrument for doing virtuous deeds and attaining liberation. That is the reason why in Charaka Samhita you will find: 'Health is the best thing in this world'.

An aspirant should be free from diseases of the mind and body if he wants to do karma yoga and attain knowledge of the Self. According to the science of all yoga, all physical diseases take their origin in the diseases of the mind, from an unhealthy state of mind. The Western psychologists also corroborate this fact. They say that the diseases of the body are attributable to hatred, anger, worry, depression, etc., which corrode the mind and react on the body and bring about various physical diseases by destroying the cells of the body.

A student of karma yoga should have an elementary knowledge of raja yoga, psychology, ayurveda, physiology, family medicine, hygiene, sankhya and vedanta, then he will be able to turn out more real work easily. He can have a knowledge of the laws of the mind, also the nature, habits and ways of the mind. He will be in a position to keep a calm and healthy mind always. No one can work smoothly with a ruffled mind. A ruffled mind disturbs the three humours of the body and brings diseases in its turn. He can have an understanding of the laws of the universe and the operation of the world by having a knowledge of the sankhya philosophy of the sage Kapila. An elementary knowledge of astrology is also of immense value. The various seasons are brought about by the movement of the earth round the sun. The atmospheric conditions affect the body of man. The planets have an influence on the mind and body of a man. They exercise benign or malevolent influence on him in accordance with their position in the various houses. He who has some knowledge of astrology can ward off the evil effects of unfavourable planets.

At every second various kinds of vibrations from the various kinds of objects of the physical universe outside enter the mind of a man and produce various influences. The body is part of the universe. So is the mind. What is called world is only mind. The mind of a man is affected by the thoughts and opinions of others. There is pressure of thought from outside. All people entertain personal thoughts and the karma yogi should have immense strength to act against these outside thoughts. He should have courage. He should have patience and perseverance. Even if he fails twenty times he should stick to his work with

determination and leech-like tenacity, adamantine will and tremendous patience. Then only will he have perfect success in the end. He will come out of the field with spiritual laurels.

Good physical health can be achieved and also maintained by observing rigidly the laws of health and the rules of hygiene; by taking wholesome, light, substantial, easily digestible, nutritious bland food; by inhaling pure air; by regular exercise; by daily cold bath and by observing moderation in eating, drinking, sexual intercourse, etc. Good mental health can be attained and maintained by japa; meditation; brahmacharya; practice of ethics, moral disciplines and right conduct; right thinking, right speaking and right action; enquiry into the nature of the Self; change of thought; relaxation of mind by dwelling the mind on pleasant thoughts; mental recreation and the practice of cheerfulness.

May we all work unselfishly with perfect harmony and healthy co-operation for the well-being of the world and for our own upliftment! May our limbs and organs grow strong and healthy! May we live to the normal length of our earthly days a hundred years- doing selfless service, studying the Vedas and developing all sattvic virtues! May we shine with the knowledge of Brahman, radiating joy, peace, bliss and knowledge to the different corners of the world.

Instructions to Aspirants

Every aspirant should study these instructions very carefully daily in the morning before he starts his work. This will enable him to c himself for the ensuing battle of daily life. He will indeed be better armed with wisdom, spiritual force and discrimination; he can ward off very many obstacles that stand in the way of his daily work. Pride, self-sufficiency, intolerance, arrogance, irritability, sell

Assertive rajasic nature, curiosity about the affairs of other people and hypocrisy are all obstacles to the practice of meditation. Subtle forms of these obstacles lurk in the mind. They operate as oceanic under-currents. Under pressure of yoga and meditation various kinds of impurities in the mind come out, just as the dirt of a room that has been shut up for six months comes out when you carefully sweep. Aspirants should introspect and watch their minds. They should remove their weaknesses one by one by applying suitable effective methods.

Pride is inveterate. Its branches ramify in all directions in the regions of the rajasic mind. Again and again it manifests, although the wave subsides temporarily for some time. It asserts when opportunities arise.

If one has the nature of being offended easily over trifling things he cannot make any progress in meditation. He should cultivate an amiable, loving nature and adaptability. Then this bad quality will disappear. Some aspirants easily get offended if their bad qualities and defects are pointed out. They become indignant and begin to fight with the man who points out the defects. They think that the man is concocting them out of jealousy and hatred. This is bad. Other people can very easily find out our defects. A man who has no life of introspection, whose mind is of out-going tendencies, cannot find out his own mistakes. The self-conceit acts as a veil and blurs the mental vision. If an aspirant wants to grow he must admit his defects if they are pointed out by others. He must try his level best to eradicate them and must thank the man who points them out. Then only can he grow in spirituality and meditation.

It becomes a difficult task to eradicate a self-assertive nature. Every man has built his personality from beginningless time. He has also given a long rope to the rajasic mind to have its own ways. This personality

has grown very strong. It becomes difficult to bend this personality and make it pliable and elastic. The man of self-assertive nature wants to dominate over others. He does not want to hear the

Opinions and arguments of others, even though they are logical and reasonable. He has a pair of jaundiced eyes. He will say: “Whatever I say is correct. Whatever I do is correct. The actions and views of others are incorrect. I am infallible.” He will never admit his mistakes. He will try his level best to support his own whimsical views by crooked arguments and reasonings. If arguments fail he will take to vituperation and hand-to-hand fight also. If people fail to show respect and honour to him he is thrown into a state of fury. He is immensely pleased when someone begins to flatter him. He will tell any number of lies to justify himself. Self-justification goes hand in hand with the self-assertive nature. This is a very dangerous habit. He can never grow in spirituality and meditation so long as he has the self-assertive nature with the habit of self-justification. The self-assertive man should change his mental attitude. He must develop the habit of looking at matters from the view-point of others. He must have a new vision of righteousness and truthfulness. An aspirant should treat respect and honour as offal and poison, and censure and insult as ornaments and nectar.

Man finds it difficult to adjust to the ways and habits of others. His mind is filled with prejudice of caste, creed and colour. He is quite intolerant. He thinks that his views, opinions and ways of living are right and that the views of others are incorrect. The fault-finding nature is ingrained in him. He jumps at once to find faults in others. He has morbid eyes. He cannot see the good in others. He cannot appreciate the meritorious actions of others. He talks of his own abilities and actions. That is the reason why he fights with people all around and cannot keep up friendship with others for a long time. Aspirants do not make progress in the path because they too have these defects to a great degree. They should eradicate them by developing tolerance, pure love and other sattvic qualities. Develop adaptability, tolerance and courage.

Introspect. Look within. Try to remove all your defects. This is real sadhana. This is the most difficult sadhana. You will have to do it at any cost. Mere intellectual development is nothing, it is easy. If you sit in the Central Library at Baroda or in the Calcutta Library for six years with a dictionary at your side you can develop your intellect. But to remove your defects needs a great deal of struggle for years and years. All the old vicious habits will have to be rent asunder. There are many famous and learned sannyasins and pandits who can deliver lectures for a week on one sloka of the Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads. They command respect and yet they are disliked by the public because they still have great defects. They have not done a drastic sadhana to remove their defects. They have developed only their intellect to a high degree. What a great pity! Any

The old samskaras of vanity, cunningness, crookedness, arrogance, petty-mindedness, fighting nature, pride, self-esteem thinking too much of one’s self, speaking ill of others, belittling others, may be still lurking in your mind. You cannot shine unless you remove them thoroughly. Success in meditation is not possible without eradication of these undesirable negative qualities of the lower nature

Those who engage themselves frequently in hot debates, vain discussions, wrangling, lingual warfare and intellectual gymnastics cause serious damage to the astral body. Much energy is wasted. Hostility is the result. Time is wasted. The astral body gets actually inflamed by heated discussions. An open sore is formed in the astral body. The blood becomes hot. It bubbles like milk over the fire. Ignorant people have no idea of the disastrous effects caused by unnecessary heated discussions and vain argumentation. Those who have the habit of arguing unnecessarily and entering into vain discussions cannot expect to make an

iota of progress in the spiritual path. They must entirely give up arguing and discussions. They should destroy the impulse of arguing through careful introspection.

Even slight annoyance and irritability affects the mind and the astral body. Aspirants should not allow these evil vrittis to manifest in the mind-lake. They may burst out as big waves of anger at any moment, if you are careless and weak. They should be nipped in the bud through the practice of forgiveness, love and sympathy for others There should not be the least disturbance in the mind-lake. It should be calm and perfectly serene. Then only will meditation be possible.

Just as a turbulent horse carries away the rider along with him, so also the emotion of anger carries away the little jiva who has no self- control. He becomes a helpless victim of emotion. Just as a capable rider controls the horses and reaches the destination safely, so also a man of self-restraint controls the emotion of anger, enjoys peace and reaches the goal of life.

Have command over temper. A terrible fit of anger shatters the physical nervous system and produces a deep and lasting impression on the inner astral body. Dark arrows shoot from the astral body. The germs that cause an epidemic of Spanish flu may die, but the wave of influenza still continues in various parts for a long time. Even so,though the effect of a fit of anger in the mind subsides in a short time, the vibration or wave continues to exist for days and weeks together in the astral body. A slight unpleasant feeling that lasts in the mind for five minutes may produce vibrations in the astral body for two or three days A terrible fit of wrath will produce deep inflammation of the astral body. It will take several months for the healing of the ulcer. Have you realized now the disastrous consequences of anger? Do not become a victim of this terrible malady. Control it by the practice of mercy, love, sympathy, enquiry and tolerance.

Worry, depression, unholy thoughts, anger and hatred produce a kind of crust or dark layer on the surface of the mind or astral body. This crust or rust or dirt prevents the beneficial influences from getting entry inside and allows the evil force or lower influences to operate. Worry does great harm to the astral body and the mind. Energy is wasted by the worry-habit. Nothing is gained by worrying. It causes inflammation of the astral body and drains the vitality of man. It should be eradicated by vigilant introspection and by keeping the mind fully occupied.

Do not make thoughtless remarks. Speak measured words. Do not speak even a single idle word. Give up idle talk, long talk, big talk and loose talk. Become silent. Do not assert your rights in this physical, illusory plane. Do not fight for rights. Think more about your duties and less about your rights. Asserting for rights comes out of rajasic egoism. These rights are worthless. It is wasting of time and energy. Assert your birthright of God-consciousness. “Thou art Brahman’ – assert this real birthright. Then you are a wise man.

If you are endowed with good character, mercy, brahmacharya, truthfulness, pure love, tolerance and serenity, these qualities will more than counter-balance many evil qualities you may possess. In time to come the evil qualities also will vanish if you are careful and if you focus your attention on them.

You have heard several eloquent lectures delivered by learned sannyasins; you have heard stories, discourses and exposition of the Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana and the Upanishads; you have heard several valuable moral and spiritual instructions, but you have not at all endeavoured to put anything into serious earnest practice and to do protracted solid sadhana. Mere intellectual assent to religious ideas, a little closing of the eyes in the morning and at night just to deceive oneself and the Indweller, a little endeavour to stick to the daily spiritual routine and to develop some virtues in a half-hearted careless some mild

effort to carry out the instructions of your spiritual preceptor perfunctorily, will not suffice. This kind of mentality should be entirely given up. Manner,

Live a life of utter devotion to service. Fill your heart with a fervour and enthusiasm for service. Live only to be a blessing to other If you want to achieve this you will have to refine your mind, you will have to polish your character, you will have to mould or build your character. You should develop sympathy, affection, benevolence tolerance and humility. Do not fight with others if their view-point differs from yours. There are many types of minds. There are many modes of thinking. There are honest differences of opinion. There are various shades of opinion. Every one is correct from his own view- point. Adjust yourself to their views. Hear their views also with love, sympathy and attention and give them a place. Come out of the centre of your small egoistic narrow circle and have a broader vision. Have catholic or liberal views. Give a place for the views of all. Then only will you have an expanded life and a very large heart. You must speak sweetly and gently in a courteous manner. You must talk very little. You must eradicate undesirable thoughts and feelings. There must not be the least tinge of pride and irritability. You must forget yourself entirely and not reserve even a trace of personal element or feeling. Have equal vision and balanced mind.

A sense of humour is a rare gift of nature. It helps the aspirants in their march on the spiritual path. It removes depression, keeps ont cheerful and brings joy and mirth to others also. But you must not cut such jokes as would wound the feelings of others. The humorous remarks must educate and correct others. They should serve the purpose of spiritual teachings. One should laugh in a mild and delicate manner. Silly giggling, guffaw or boisterous, indecent and unrefined Laughter in a rude manner should be completely avoided. They preven the spiritual progress of the aspirant and destroy serenity of the mind and serious magnanimous attitude. The sage smiles through the eyes It is grand and thrilling. Only intelligent aspirants can understand this. Do not be childish and silly.

Complete dedication to service is needed. Kill selfishness and idea of superiority. Be humble and gentle and sweet. Feel all forms are the forms of the Lord. Feel you are serving the Lord alone.

If you are equipped with the above qualifications, you are beacon-light and a rare blessing to the world at large. You are indeed a rare and sweet flower whose delicious aroma will permeate and pervade throughout the length and breadth of the land. You will attain the exalted state of Buddhahood.

Be polite, courteous, kind, obliging and helpful, not now and then, not by fits and starts, but all the time, all throughout your life's career. Never speak a word that can jar or offend others. Think before you speak and see that what you are going to say will not hurt the feelings of others, that it is sensible, sweet, truthful and soft. Carefully note beforehand what will be the consequences of your thoughts, speech and actions. You may fail in the beginning several times, but you are bound to attain success in the end if you persist in the practice.

You must not do any work perfunctorily or in a careless, half- hearted manner, without taking any interest. You cannot evolve if you take this attitude of mind. The whole heart, mind, intellect and soul must be in the work, then only can you call it yoga or worship of God. Some people have their hands at the work, the mind at the market, the intellect in the office and the soul upon the wife or son. This is bad. You must do all work efficiently and perfectly. The motto should be: 'One thing at a time and that done well is a very good rule as many can tell.' If your guru or friend asks you to wash a towel, take his clothes also for washing without his knowledge. If your preceptor says: "Bring me some groundnut oil," extract the oil in

the twinkling of an eye and take it in a cup to your guru. Run to him with the cup in your hand, with panting breath, with your body bathed in profuse perspiration, and say: “O venerable Master, dispeller of my ignorance! Here is the oil for thee.” If a passer-by asks for a cup of water, say to him with courtesy, in sweet words: “Brother, take your seat. Here is water. Here is a cup of milk for you. Rest awhile on this seat. I shall massage your legs and fan you. You are tired.” This is real service. This is real yoga. If you do service with this mental attitude for one or two years you will become an entirely changed being, a veritable God-man on this earth.

Do not do anything in a hurry-scurry, in haste or flurry. Do every bit of work with a cool, unruffled mind. Be perfectly accurate in doing any kind of work. Collect all your scattered thoughts and apply your full mind to the work on hand. Many spoil their work by doing it in haste without reflection or consideration. They repent later on. This is bad. Take your own time, it does not matter, but do it well with scientific or geometrical accuracy in a dexterous and masterly manner.

Be on the alert when you do service in society. Unselfish service of any kind, platform lectures or any kind of public activity will surely bring name and fame. Name and fame will destroy you like a canker in a blossom or in a young plant. Treat name and fame as poison. Become very very humble, Let this virtue be ingrained in your heart, in every cell, in every nerve, in every fibre of your being. Many have had their downfall by becoming victims to this powerful intoxicant -name and fame. Their progress was stopped. Hence I seriously warn you.

You must be able to think quickly and act promptly with unerring precision and profound concentration in times of emergencies. You must take care to see that you are not rash and impetuous. You must be cool and collected. You must develop to a remarkable degree the spirit of discrimination, discernment, alacrity, alertness, the faculty of expertness which will help you to decide a right line of action when you are in a dilemma. Then only will you be able to find out what is exactly required at a critical juncture or at the right time and not an hour afterwards. You will not regret afterwards in any way.

It is extremely difficult to have a calm and pure mind. But you must have such a mind if you want to progress in meditation, if you desire to do nishkama karma yoga. Then only will you have a perfect instrument, a well-controlled mind at your disposal. This is one of the most important qualifications for aspirants. You will have to struggle hard for a long time with patience and perseverance to get this. Nothing is impossible for a sadhaka who has an iron will and strong determination.

You must not be discouraged even a bit by repeated failures. You should know the causes which brought about the failures and should be careful in future to avoid them. You will have to fortify yourself carefully. In your weakness lies the secret of your strength. You will have to stick doggedly to your ideals, convictions and sadhana despite repeated failures, and march boldly on the path. Say: “Come what may, I will surely come out with perfect success in this spiritual struggle. I will realise the Self in this very birth, nay, this very second. Failures or slips cannot in any way affect me.”

I am always ready to help you. My sympathies are ever with you. I will radiate joy, peace and thought-currents of love towards you. I will inspire you, but I cannot do the work for you. You yourself will have to do the work. The struggle and exertion must come from your side. A hungry man will have to eat for himself, a thirsty man will have to drink for himself. You will have to place each step yourself on the spiritual ladder. Remember this point always. Dear immortal soul! Be bold. Be cheerful even though you are on

The roll of unemployment, even though you have nothing to eat, even though you are clad in rags. Thy essential nature is satchidananda existence, knowledge, bliss absolute. The outer cloak, this mortal physical sheath, is an illusory mayaic production. Smile, laugh, whistle and dance in joy and ecstasy. Sing 'Om, Om, Om', 'Ram, Ram, Ram', 'Shyam, Shyam, Shyam', 'Sivoham, Sivoham, Sivoham', 'Soham, Soham, Soham'. Come out of this cage of flesh. Thou art not this perishable body. Thou art the immortal soul. Thou art the sexless Atman. Thou art the son of the King of kings, of the Emperor of emperors – the Brahman of the Upanishads, the Atman that dwells in the chambers of your heart. Act as such, feel as such and claim your birthright, not from tomorrow or the day after, but right now at this very second. Tat Twam Asi – Thou art That.

Express Love Through Worshipful Service

Service is a natural expression of love. Realization is the fruit. Cosmic love expressed through untiring dynamic selfless service expands the heart of man and widens his vision. One can conquer the whole world through love, humility and service.

A special power comes from God to those who have a pure and steady love of humanity. The more you spend your energy in elevating and serving others, the more divine energy will flow into you.

The life of an aspirant is one long series of renunciation and daily sacrifice. He lives to serve others and make them happy. He forgets all about himself. He has no selfishness or ego.

Selfless service can reveal to you the identity of humanity. It can expand your heart and take you to the door of intuition. Identify yourself with all; love all; and constantly remind yourself of your essential divine nature. Feel that you are one with the whole universe. The whole world is bound to work with one who feels himself one with the world.

An opportunity once neglected may not come again. My method is to be always on the lookout for opportunities. Watch for them and utilise them. Be full of initiative. Opportunities are more sensitive than the anicha flower. If you slight them on their first visit, you will not see them again.

Be ever ready to serve. Serve with pure love, kindness and courtesy. Never grumble or murmur during service. Never show a wry or gloomy face when you serve. The man whom you serve will refuse to accept such service and you will lose an opportunity. Watch for opportunities to serve. Never miss a single chance. Create opportunities. Create a field for good service; create work.

Plunge in selfless service. Selfless service purifies the heart and opens it for the receipt of divine light. Learn a lesson from the ancient culture and work for the uplift of the country and welfare of the world. Service of humanity is the best work of life. Live to benefit mankind He is true to God who is true to man.

It is far better, out of love, to leave the ecstasy and serve the needy people. It is better to serve the sick and the needy man and feed the hungry than to see visions. For me the highest goal is the glory of service at the feet of the Lord.

See God in all. There is so much suffering in the world. Serve. Serve. Serve selflessly, untiringly with the feeling of God's presence in all. Love all; for God dwells in all. Realise the evanescence of life. Be pure, be humble, be generous, be noble.

Cheer up a man who is in distress; encourage a man when he is dispirited; wipe the tears of the afflicted; remove the sorrow in a man by loving words; make a man smile when he is in despair. These are al different forms of charity.

Be a lamp to those who have lost their way. Be a doctor and nurse to the ailing patients. Be a boat and bridge to those who want to reach the other shore of fearlessness and immortality.

Only he who has reduced his wants and controlled the sense organs can do karma yoga. How can a luxury loving man with uncontrolled senses serve others? He wants everything for himself and wants to exploit and domineer over others.

A karma yogi should speak the truth although it is against himself Truth alone triumphs but not falsehood. Purity is the best jewel of yogi. Fearlessness is the best treasure of a sage. Humility is the bes wealth of a devotee.

No two persons in this world have the same view or opinion. You should not entertain the least dislike for that man whose view or opinion or belief differs from that of yours.

Do not bother much about your body and life. God will save it i He needs it for further service in this body. Surrender it at His feet and rest in peace. He will take care of it.

A man with very sensitive, sentimental, emotional nature cannot become a public worker or karma yogi. He will be easily upset by misrepresentation, harsh words and public criticism. He will worry himself and waste his mental energy for trifling matters through unnecessary feelings. A public worker must have a tough skin and an enduring, steady mind which cannot be easily hurt by remarks, criticisms and insults. He must be endowed with remarkable steadfastness. No sufferings come to the man who is not attached to name and form, who is free from egoism and passion and who calls nothing his own.

He who is earnest and meditative, who delights in reflection, who is vigilant and alert, who is fearless and thoughtful, climbs the heights of wisdom and obtains perennial joy. Work out your salvation yourself in right earnest. No one can save you. You will yourself have to take each step in the ladder of yoga.

Just as the blacksmith straightens the iron rod in the anvil, so also the yoga student straightens the unsteady mind and thought through the regular practice of concentration.

Do your duty to the best of your ability and leave the rest to God. Do all your actions detachedly in a spirit of dedication to the divine. Then actions will not bind you. Your heart will be purified. The more selfless and dedicated we are, the nearer to Godhood we will be.

A disciplined man only can serve the people. Not by abstention. From work does a man attain freedom from action; nor by mere renunciation does he attain perfection.

Kill egoism and desires. You will attain freedom from action. Actions will not bind you. You will attain perfection.

Through the grace of God be unified in thought, purpose and understanding and inspired to right action for the good of all mankind. Rise above the grooves of selfishness. Free yourself from all forms of narrow-mindedness. Dedicate yourself to the ideals of truth, love and purity. Serve your fellow-beings. This is the way to supreme blessedness.

PRACTICE OF KARMA YOGA

The Four Paths

Union with God is the goal of this human life. It is the be-all and end-all of our existence. It is the summum bonum of life.

You may reach this goal by different paths. Just as you can reach Mt. Kailas by different paths such as Almora, Gangotri or Ladhak, so also you can reach the goal of life by different paths, viz: the path of work (karma yoga), love (bhakti yoga), psychic control (raja yoga) or self-analysis and knowledge (jnana yoga). Just as you can reach Calcutta by train, car, aeroplane or steamer, so also you can reach the goal of life or spiritual destination by any one of these four paths. Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita:

"In whatever way men approach Me even so do I reward them; My path d men tread in all ways, O Arjuna." (IV:II)

Karma yoga leads to bhakti yoga which in turn leads to raja yoga. Raja yoga brings jnana (direct knowledge). Parabhakti is jnana only. Bhakti, it must be borne in mind, is not divorced from jnana contrary it is intensified by it. Karma purifies the heart. Bhakti removes – on the tossing of the mind. Raja yoga steadies the mind and destroys desire and imagination.

Every yoga is a fulfilment of the preceding one: bhakti is the fulfilment of karma, raja yoga of bhakti and karma, and jnana of all the preceding three.

Karma, bhakti and raja yoga are the means to an end. Jnana is the end. Just as rivers join the sea, so also karma, bhakti and raja yoga join the ocean of jnana.

The four paths are not hard and fast. There is no marked demarcation line between them. They are not cut and dried. They are not very rigid and marked. These paths are made in accordance with the temperament and tendency that is predominant in the individual. One path does not exclude the other path, each path blends into the other. Ultimately they all converge and become one. It is very difficult to say where raja yoga ends and jnana yoga begins. All aspirants of different paths meet on a common platform or junction in the long run.

Bhakti yoga is the path of devotion or the path of affection that is suitable to people of devotional temperament, in whom the love-element predominates. Women are fit for bhakti yoga, as affection predominates in them. Raja yoga is suited to men of mystic temperament. Those who are fond of acquiring siddhis (psychic powers) can take up this path. Jnana is the path of vedanta. Men of rational temperament with reasoning power, strong individual thinking and bold reasoning can take up this path. Those who have active temperament can follow the path of karma yoga.

A karma yogi does self-sacrifice to kill his little self. A bhakta practises self-surrender to annihilate his egoism. A jnani practises self- denial. The methods are different, but all want to destroy this little self-arrogating 'I' which is the root cause for human sufferings. When this is done they meet at the same goal or point.

"*All actions in their entirety, O Partha, culminate in wisdom." Bhagavad Gita (IV:33).*

'Work for work's sake without any motive' is all very well in words, but when one comes to the practical field, when one endeavours to put it into actual practice, he will have to encounter countless difficulties at every step. A jnani alone can do absolutely unselfish, motiveless action. Only a sannyasin who has renounced the world can do selfless deeds. A householder's mind is saturated with desires, he expects fruits for every action. But gradually he too can wean the mind from expectation of rewards. It is all a question of discipline of mind. By and by his selfish nature will be destroyed. He will understand the glory of nishkama karma yoga, and then he will be able to do works without motives, without expectation of fruits of action.

Karma yoga is the lowest rung in the spiritual ladder, but it lifts us up to ineffable, magnanimous heights. Its glory is too great to be described. It destroys pride, selfishness and tamas. It brings in wonderful results. It helps growth and evolution. People of active temperament should take up karma yoga.

The practice of karmayoga prepares the aspirant for the reception of knowledge of the Self. It makes him a proper aspirant for the study of vedanta. Ignorant people jump at once to jnana yoga, without having a preliminary training in karma yoga. That is the reason why they fail miserably to realise the Truth. Their minds are filled with likes and dislikes, jealousy etc. They only talk of Brahman. They indulge in all sorts of useless controversies, vain debates and dry, endless discussions. Their philosophy is on their lips only. In other words they are lip-vedantins. What is really wanted is practical vedanta through ceaseless, selfless service.

Bhakti yoga is suitable for the vast majority of devotees. Generally there is a mixture of devotional and intellectual temperaments in all men, though some are purely devotional and some are purely intellectual. Bhakti is also classified as mental karma. Raja yoga is also a form of bhakti yoga. In bhakti yoga the devotee does absolute self- surrender to the Lord. The bhakta depends upon the Lord. He is extremely humble. A raja yogi has subtle egoism. He exerts and asseru, He is of an independent nature.

Bhakti yoga and jnana yoga are not incompatibles like acid and alkali. One can combine one-pointed devotion with jnana yoga. The fruit of bhakti yoga is jnana. Highest love (para bhakti) and jnana are one. Perfect knowledge is love; perfect love is knowledge.

Sri Sankara, a kevala advaita jnani, was a great bhakta of Lord Hari, Hara and Devi. Jnana Dev of Alandi, Poona, a great yogi, w a bhakta of Lord Krishna. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa worshipped Kali and got jnana through Swami Totapuri, his advaita guru. Lord Gauranga of Bengal was a great advaita vedantic scholar and yet he danced in the streets and market places singing the names of Hari Appaya Dikshita, a famous jnani of Adaiyapalam, the author d Siddhanta Lesha and various other vedantic books, was a devotee of Lord Siva. It shows, therefore, that bhakti can be combined with mud advantage with jnana.

Bhakti is a means to an end. It gives purity of mind. It removes tossing of the mind. Devotion with expectation of fruits brings heave for the devotee, but love without expectation of fruits brings purity mind through which the aspirant gets jnana.

Raja yoga aims to control all thought waves or mental modifications. The second sutra in the first chapter of the Yoga Sutra of Patanjali Maharshi reads:

Yoga is the restraint of mental modifications."

This is the definition of raja-yoga according to Patanjali Maharshi Sri Jnana Dev, Goraknath, Raja Bhartrihari and Sadasiva Brahman were all raja yogis of great repute and glory.

Steadfastness

Steadfastness in yoga means perfect devotion and sticking to one's ideal. There is no wavering or oscillation of the mind here.

The seer of the Isavasya Upanishad prescribes, in the first sloka, the method to enter into jnana nishtha (steadfastness). The meaning of the sloka is:

"*All this, movable and immovable, is indwelt by the Lord. Renounce names and forms. Renounce the sensual pleasures and enjoy the bliss of the Atman. Do not covet anybody's wealth."*

This is the path of renunciation for sannyasins.

In the second sloka he prescribes steadfastness for householders who are not competent to follow the path of renunciation by taking sannyas:

"*Always performing works here one should wish to live for a hundred years. If live thus as a man, there is no way other than this by which karma (or the law you of cause and effect) does not adhere to you."*

The karma yogi has the firm unshakable conviction that his steadfastness will lead him to the goal and attainment of supreme bliss. He plunges himself in karma. He is absorbed in karma. Raja Janaka and Mahatma Gandhi were steadfast in karma yoga. They never deviated from their ideal. Steadfastness is a sine qua non for success. Then only one can apply his full heart, mind and intellect to the work on hand. Failure is due to lack of steadfastness. Steadfastness develops willpower. It helps quick growth and rapid evolution, and removes the stumbling blocks on the path of realisation.

The Actionless State

Simply sitting quiet cannot make a man actionless. He will have a thousand and one thoughts in the mind. The mind must become perfectly quiet. One should be absolutely thoughtless, then only does he gain freedom from action. I repeat again the words of the Bhagavad Gita: "*Nor can anyone, even for an instant, remain really actionless; for helplessly is everyone driven to action by the qualities born of nature." (III:5)*

Again the Gita says: "There is no being on earth or again in heaven among the gods, that is liberated from the three qualities born of Nature" (XVIII:40) That yogi who has transcended the three qualities of tamas and sattva and rests in the Self, can be really actionless. The Lord further says: "Nor indeed can embodied beings completely relinquish action." (XVIII:11) rajas,

If anyone sits quiet by merely controlling the organs of action through the practice of hatha yoga, and if his mind constantly dwells on the objects of the senses, he is no doubt a perfect hypocrite. Lord Krishna extols the man who "*Controlling the senses by the mind, 0 Arjuna, with the organs of action, without attachment performs yoga by action." (III:7)* In verse three of the same chapter He say*s: "Nobody can*

attain perfection, i freedom from action and devotion in the path of jnana yoga, by mere renunciation by merely abandoning action without acquiring Brahma jnana."

Knowledge and Action

The cause of human suffering is ignorance. Sri Sankara holds the view that it is the knowledge of Brahman only that is capable of eradicating the ignorance of human beings. Sri Sankara says in his Atma Bodha: "*Karmic rituals cannot destroy ignorance, because they are n hostile to each other. But knowledge certainly destroys ignorance, as light destroys the thickest darkness. When compared with other means, jnana (knowledge of the Self is the only direct means to freedom. As cooking is not possible without fire, so u emancipation not possible without Brahma jnana.*" Others hold the view that the pursuit of the knowledge of the Self should be accompanied by the performance of Vedic rites. (Sri Sankara refutes this view.) They bring the illustration of the bird. Just as a bird necessarily needs two wing for flying up in the sky, so the individual soul also requires both knowledge and action to enable him to attain moksha or liberation and that neither the one nor the other is sufficient singly for that purpose

Meditation and Action

That man who meditates in a cave in the Himalayas finds difficult to work in the world. He cannot meditate in the upstairs of building that is situated in the heart of a city. That man who works is the world finds it equally difficult to remain in a solitary place. Neither have got a balanced mind. Neither are perfect. Both have a one-sided development. The man who can meditate in a solitary retreat for six months and who can work in the world for another six months whole heartedly, is an ideal yogi or a perfect man. He is the ideal karma yogi. He is really a strong man. He has integral development. Nothing can upset his mind even when he is placed under any unfavourable condition and bad environment.

If one has practised abstraction of the senses he can withdraw his mind, just as the tortoise withdraws its feet underneath its shell. No sound can disturb his mind. The firing of a cannon, the rolling sound of motor lorries and bullock-carts in the streets cannot make any impression in his mind. He is practically dead to the world, but he is really very busy inside. He can convert a busy city into a big forest. But if a man has no abstraction or concentration he will find a big city in the thick of the forest. Aspirants should watch and test the mind always. They should try to keep this perfect balance. Real meditation gives immense inner strength. If one cannot realize this inner peace and strength, surely there is some error in their spiritual practices or meditation. Building castles in the air or sleepy state, brooding and other negative states of the mind should not be mistaken for samadhi or meditation. Untrained, inexperienced aspirants always make mistakes and are deluded.

A microscopic minority only are fit for full and deep meditation. The vast majority should combine meditation with action in the beginning.

"*For a sage who wishes to attain to yoga, action is said to be the means; for the same sage who has attained to yoga, inaction (quiescence) is said to be the means." Bhagavad Gita (VI:3)*

For a man who cannot practise meditation for a long time and who is not able to keep his mind steady in meditation, action is a means to get himself enthroned in yoga. Action purifies the mind and makes it fit for the practice of steady concentration and meditation.

When performed as an offering to the Lord without expectation of fruits, action purifies the heart and prepares the aspirant for the dawn of Brahma jnana.

Neophytes and young men can work and meditate in the beginning for some years. When they advance in meditation, when they can meditate for hours together, work must be completely stopped. It becomes a hindrance. That is the reason why the Gita says: "*For a sage who is seeking yoga, action is called the means; for the same sage when he is enthroned in yoga, serenity is called the means." (VI:3)*

If ordinary students give up work they will become dull and lazy. If you do not improve in pure meditation, then combine work with meditation. Use your common sense always. One can only reach a certain stage in yoga, jnana or bhakti while he remains in the world Seclusion and meditation are needed for highest realization. Then, on the attainment of this the full-blown yogi or jnani or bhakta should again come back to the world to elevate other people, for the purpose world-solidarity.

Kill Desire

"*Arjuna said: 'But, dragged on by what does a man commit sin, reluctant indeed, O Varshneya, as it were by force constrained? The Blessed Lord said: desire, it is wrath, begotten by the quality of mobility, all-consuming and polluting know thou this as our foe here on earth. As a flame is enveloped by smoke, as a mirror by dust, as an embryo is wrapped by the amnion, so this enveloped by it. Enveloped is divine wisdom by this constant enemy of the wise it the form of desire, which is insatiable as a flame. The senses, the mind and the reason are said to be its seat; by these, enveloping wisdom, it bewilders the dweller in the body. Therefore, O best of the Bharatas, mastering first the senses, do that slay this thing of sin, destructive of wisdom and knowledge. It is said that the senses are great; greater than the senses is the mind; greater than the mind is reason, that which is greater than reason, is He. Thus understanding Him as greater the reason, restraining the self by the Self, slay thou, O mighty-armed, the enemy in th e form of desire, difficult to overcome.' Bhagavad Gita: (III:36-43)*

Desires can never be satiated or cooled down by the enjoyment d objects. But as fire blazes forth the more when fed with oil and wood so it grows the more when it feeds on objects of enjoyment. If all the foods of the earth, all the precious metals, all animals and all beautiful women were to pass into the possession of a man deluded by desire they would fail to give him satisfaction.

Emperor Yayati ruled over his subjects in a righteous manner many years. At last, when overcome with old age, he called his oldest son Yadu and spoke to him: "O child! Old age, wrinkles and white ha have come over me, but I have not yet got over the longings of youth. Yadu! Take upon yourself my old age and consequent decrepitude exchange for your youth. When one thousand years will be complete I shall return your youth to you and take back my decrepitude and i consequent weakness."

Yadu did not agree to exchange his youth for his father's old ag Yayati approached the next three sons, but they also declined. Then the youngest son, Puru, told Yayati, "O great king! I shall do as you command me. I shall take upon myself your old age and its consequences. Take my youth and enjoy the pleasures of life. At your command I shall assume your old age and occupy the throne."'

Yayati became a youth of Puru's age. Puru took Yayati's age and governed the kingdom. Yayati was extremely delighted. He again plunged into the pleasures of life. He enjoyed life for a long time. He

enjoyed himself to the utmost extent; yet he was not satiated. Then he spoke: “O son, I have enjoyed with your youth to the full extent of my desires and to the full limit of my powers and according to their seasons – but desires never die. They are never satiated by indulgence. By indulgence they flame up like sacrificial fire with ghee poured into it. If one becomes the sole Lord of all the earth with its paddy, oats, gems, beasts and women, still it will not be considered by him to be enough. Therefore, the thirst for enjoyment should be abandoned. The thirst for enjoyment which is difficult to cast off by the wicked, which does not fail even with the failing of life, is truly a fatal disease in man. To get rid of this thirst is real happiness.”

Understand that desire that is born of the quality of rajas is man’s enemy in this world. The real enemy of the whole world is desire. It is from this desire that all the evils and miseries come to human beings. When desire manifests it goads man to action and so he commits sins of various sorts. When a man’s desire is not gratified, when someone stands in the way of its fulfilment, he becomes angry. The desire gets transmuted into anger. When a man is under the sway of anger, he will commit all sorts of sins. He loses his memory, intellect and understanding. An angry man commits murder. He himself does not know what he is exactly doing. He becomes very emotional and impulsive. All evil actions and evil qualities proceed from anger.

When desire gets hold of a man it hides the knowledge of his true nature from him. Desire enshrouds wisdom, just as smoke enshrouds fire. He becomes egoistic. He gets deluded. He becomes a slave of passion and gets miseries of all sorts.

The senses bring the man in contact with external objects and the desires are thereby created. But the senses are not all-in-all. If the mind co-operates with the senses, then only is mischief wrought. Mind is more powerful than the senses. Mind is the commander. Reason is more powerful than the mind. Even if the mind brings a message into the mental factory by its association with the senses, the pure reason can reject it altogether. Reason is more powerful than the mind. Behind reason is the Self who is the director and witness of reason and who is superior to reason. Desire is of a highly complex and incomprehensible nature. Therefore, it is very difficult to eradicate it or conquer it, but with the help of pure reason all desires can be eventually destroyed There is no doubt of this.

Practice of Brahmacharya

As the practice of karma yoga is not possible without brahmacharya, I have given here a short description of the benefits is well as the methods by which one can be established in physical and mental celibacy.

One of the students of the Dhanvantari (the founder of ayurveda approached his teacher after finishing his full course of ayurveda and asked him; “O Bhagavan, kindly let me know the secret of health now” Dhanvantari replied: “This virya (seminal energy) is verily Atman. The secret of health lies in preservation of this vital force. He who wastes this energy cannot have physical, mental, moral and spiritual development.”

If the virya is lost, prana gets unsteady. Prana is agitated and the man becomes nervous. Then the mind also cannot work properly and he becomes fickle-minded. There is mental weakness.

According to ayurveda, semen is the last dhatu (element) that formed out of marrow. From food, chyle is manufactured. Out of chyle comes blood; out of blood comes flesh; out of flesh comes fat; out of fat

comes marrow; out of marrow comes semen. These are the seven dhatus. There are three divisions in each dhatu. Semen nourishes the physical body, heart and intellect. That man who uses his physical body only but keeps the intellect and heart undeveloped cannot expect to attain perfect brahmacharya. He can have brahmacharya of the body only but not of the mind and heart. The semen that belongs to the heart and mind will certainly flow out. If an aspirant does regular prayer, japa and meditation only, if he does not develop the heart and he does not practise physical exercise, he will have mental brahmacharya only. That portion of the semen which goes to nourish the heart and body will flow out. But an advanced yogi who doe higher, deep meditation will have full brahmacharya even if he does not take physical exercise.

The ignorant man is an instrument in the hands of his innate tendencies and actions. He slowly gains strength by understanding his real essential nature, by doing spiritual sadhana and by removing desires and egoism.

This world is nothing but sex and ego. Ego is the chief thing. It is the basis. Sex hangs on the ego. If the ego is destroyed by enquiry of Who am I?', the sex-idea takes to its heels by itself. Man, master of his destiny, has lost his divine glory and has become a slave, a tool, in the hands of sex and ego on account of ignorance. Sex and ego are the products of ignorance or nescience. The dawn of knowledge of the Self annihilates these two enemies of the Atman, the two dacoits who are plundering the helpless, ignorant, little false jiva, the illusory 'I'.

If the sexual energy is transmuted into spiritual energy by pure thoughts, it is called sex-sublimation in Western psychology. Just as metals and chemicals are purified by heating, so also the sexual energy is purified and changed into divine energy by spiritual sadhana, by entertaining sublime, soul-elevating thoughts of the Self or Atman. In yoga one in whom the seminal energy has flown upwards into the brainas ojas shakti, is called an urdhvareta. There is no possibility of the semen going downward through sexual excitement.

This process is extremely difficult. It demands constant and protracted sadhana and perfect discipline. That yogi who has achieved perfect sublimation has perfect control over lust. There is no fear of his downfall. He is perfectly safe. He can embrace young women, and yet he will be absolutely free from any impurity. This stage is a very high stage. A very small minority only have attained this sublime exalted state. Sri Sankara, Sri Dattatreya and Jnana Dev of Alandi reached this stage.

That yogi who has disciplined himself through ceaseless and protracted sadhana, continuous meditation, pranayama and enquiry, the practice of tranquillity, ethics and moral disciplines, is also safe, although he has not attained the state of perfect sex-sublimation. He will not be attracted by women. He has thinned out the mind. The mind is starved to death. It cannot raise its hood. It cannot hiss.

The yogi or jnani who has attained the highest nirvikalpa samadhi, in whom the seeds of samskaras (innate tendencies) are fried in toto can claim to be a perfect urdhavareta, or one who has complete sex-sublimation.

The process of sex-sublimation is very difficult and yet it is most necessary for the aspirant in the path of spirituality. It is the most

Important qualification for the aspirant, either in the path of karma yoga, raja yoga or vedanta. You must achieve this at any cost. You will surely attempt this in some future birth why not now?

Brahmacharya is a fundamental pre-requisite for any aspirant. If one has this qualification or merit, all other merits will cling to him. All divine qualities will come by themselves.

The practice of celibacy is not attended with any danger or any on the contrary, even a little self-restraint or a little practice of continence is an ideal 'pick-me-up'. It gives inner strength and peace of mind. It invigorates the mind and the nerves. It helps to conserve physical and mental energy. It augments memory, will-force and brain- power. It bestows tremendous strength, vigour and vitality. It renovates the system, rebuilds the cells and tissues, helps digestion and gives one power to face the difficulties in the daily battle of life. A perfect celibate can shake the world, can stop the ocean waves like Lord Jesus, can blow up mountains, can command Nature and the five elements like Jnana Dev. There is nothing in the three worlds that cannot be achieved by him. All psychic powers roll at his feet.

It is quite possible for a man to practise celibacy while remaining in the world where there are various sorts of temptations and distractions. Many have achieved this in times of yore. There are many even at the present time also. A well disciplined life, study of religious literature, satsang, japa, meditation, pure and moderate diet. Pranayama, daily introspection and enquiry, self-analysis and self- correction, practice of yama, niyama, physical and mental tapas and good conduct in accordance with the teachings of the seventeenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, will all pave the way to the attainment of this end. People have an irregular, unrighteous, immoderate, irreligious, undisciplined life. Just as the elephant throws sand on its head, so also they themselves bring difficulties and troubles on their own heads on account of their foolishness.

Sex-sublimation is within your reach if you wish to attain it. The path is quite clear, straight and smooth if you understand it, and if you apply yourself with patience, perseverance, determination and strong will, if you practise discipline of the senses, right conduct, right thinking, right acting, regular meditation, auto-suggestion and enquiry of 'Who am I? The Atman is unchanging. Feel this. Can there be any trace of lust or impurity in the eternal and pure Atman?

Thou art the eternal, pure, perfect, all-wise, free Self. Feel this. Assert this birthright, claim this birthright while working in the world. This is better than life in a cave. This is dynamic, integral yoga. This was the yoga of Sri Sankara and Lord Buddha also.

Transcend the Pairs of Opposites

Misery and happiness, pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, life and death, good and evil, are the obverse and reverse of the same coin. Evil cannot exist without good. Life cannot exist without death. They are relative terms. Ignorant people want absolute happiness in this world. This is simply impossible and puerile. They want life without death, happiness without misery, gain without any loss. If you do not want death, give up life in the sensual plane. If you do not want pain, give up sensual pleasure. Pain and pleasure, life and death are linked together inseparably.

Evil exists to glorify good. To glorify love there is the existence of hatred. Falsehood exists to glorify truth. A vagabond exists to glorify a saint. A prostitute exists to glorify a chaste woman. A drunkard exists to glorify a teetotaller.

This world is a very big and marvellous museum. If only saints, honest people and sober men exist in this world, it will look like a prison-house. Variety in manifestation is innate in nature; it keeps up the charm of this world. Transcend the pairs of opposites and rest in the non-dual and absolute Brahman. There alone you will find absolute good, absolute bliss and absolute knowledge.

Sin is a Mistake Only

Only the ignorant man says: "I am a great sinner." This is a serious mistake. Never for a moment think that you are a sinner. You are the most holy one, you are the ever-pure Atman. Sin cannot touch you. You are above vice and virtue. Good and evil are mental creations only. Sins are mistakes only. An ignorant jiva commits these mistakes during the course of his journey in this world on account of ignorance

Sin is nothing but a mistake only. Through mistakes you gain experiences and march forward in the path of spirituality. Every mistake is your best teacher. One has to evolve through sins and mistakes. These mistakes are inevitable. Some people become a prey to thoughts of sin. They ever brood: "We are great sinners. We have committed many crimes." This is a great blunder.

There is no such thing as 'horrible crime' or 'heinous sin' in the light of knowledge or higher philosophy. Many people worry themselves that they have committed serious crimes and consequently become prey to the haunting thoughts of the so-called sin. One should never say: "I am a great sinner." On the contrary he should assert: "I am eternally the pure Atman." Purity is your birthright. In essence thou art the most sacred Atman. Feel this, feel this!

Whenever thoughts of this nature worry you, you should think: T am doing japa of Om. This will burn all old sinful actions. This will purify my mind. I am practising austerities, fasting and doing charity. These are all great purifiers. I am becoming purer and purer. Nothing can affect me now. I am like the effulgent fire. I have become a holy person.' Assert, whenever such negative thoughts of sin trouble you: '1 am the ever-pure Atman.'

Hear the words of assurance of Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita: "*Even if thou art the most sinful of all sinners, yet shalt thou cross over all sin by the raft of wisdom. As the burning fire reduces fuel to ashes, O Arjuna, so doth the fire of wisdom reduce all action to ashes. Verily, there is no purifier in this world like wisdom; he that is perfected in yoga finds it in the Self in due season." (IV:36,37,38)*

"*Even if the most sinful worships Me with undivided heart, he too must be accounted righteous, for he hath rightly resolved. Speedily he becomes dutiful and goes to eternal peace. O Arjuna, know thou for certain that My devotee never perishes. They who take refuge in Me, O Partha, though of the womb of sin, women, vaishyas, even sudras, they also tread the highest path. How much more easily, then, the holy brahmins and devoted royal saints (attain the goal); having obtained this impermanent and unhappy world, do thou worship Me. Fix thy mind on Me be devoted to Me, sacrifice unto Me, bow down to Me, having thus united thy whole self in Me, taking Me as the supreme goal, thou shalt come to Me." (IX:30-34)*

Pain: The Best Teacher

Pain is the best teacher in the world. Man learns very useful lessons daily through pain, suffering, poverty, privation, sickness etc. It is the eye-opener. It is a blessing in disguise. It is the sweet messenger from God.

It is pain that makes man remember God. Kunti Devi said: "O Lord Krishna! Let me always remember Thee. Give me always pain. I may forget Thee if I get pleasure." Bhaktas rejoice in suffering. They welcome pain always. Stoics also do the same.

Pain corrects, educates, and disciplines the soul. It infuses mercy into the heart. It develops power of endurance and patience. It softens the hard heart. It develops the will-power. It fills the heart with sympathy. It makes the proud man humble. It purifies the heart.

Just as the iron is shaped in the anvil by heating, so also man's character is moulded by blows, knocks and pain. Just as impure gold is made pure by melting it in the crucible several times, so also man becomes pure by being burnt in the furnace of pain.

It is chill penury that turns the mind of a man towards God. Knocks and blows of severe type wean the mind of a man from sensual objects and turn it in the path of spirituality. Pain and poverty, evil and misery mould the character of a man more than pleasure and wealth.

Censure and blows are better teachers than praise and honour. Pain is a better teacher than pleasure. Poverty has got its own advantages. It is a better teacher than wealth. Pain and poverty develop endurance in man. Sri Sankara, the greatest philosopher and genius whom the world has ever produced, was born in a very poor family. Lord Jesus was the son of a carpenter. Poor people exert to achieve greatness, whereas sons of rich people lead a life of luxury and inertia. They are happy-go-lucky. Severe knocks immediately produce. Discrimination (viveka) and dispassion (vairagya), change the angle of vision and raise up the spiritual fire that lies within.

Sannyasins, Wake Up

Mere study of scriptures cannot bring in the experience of pure, non-dual consciousness. Vedantic gossiping and idle, dry talk on the Brahma Sutras and the Upanishads cannot help a man in feeling the unity or oneness of life. There is no hope for him to feel the unity of consciousness Brahman)" "Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma (all this indeed is unless he ruthlessly destroys all sorts of ill-will, hatred, petty-mindedness, jealousy, envy, idea of superiority and all barriers that separate man from man, by incessant protracted service of humanity with the right mental attitude. Practical vedanta is rare in these days. There are only dry discussions and meaningless fights over the non-essentials of various religions.

The central teaching of the Bhagavad Gita is Self-Realization in and through the world. The same thing is preached by Sri Vasistha to Sri Rama in the Yoga Vasistha. To serve humanity, God in manifestation, and to think of God while living in the world amids various activities, is far superior to a cave-life. Selfless work is Work is worship. There is no loss in selfless service. Real spiritual progress starts there. Yoga.

Just as a medical student cannot understand pathology, diagnosis and medicine if he neglects to study physiology and morphology in the beginning, so also the aspirant cannot understand and realize the spirit

and object of vedanta if he neglects to serve without expectation of fruits to eradicate the impurities of his mind. Practice of karma yoga eventually culminates in the vedantic realization of the Self.

"*All actions in their entirety, O Partha, culminate in wisdom*," says Lord Krishna to Arjuna. There is not even an iota of hope to realize the Self without self-purification by selfless service. Serve everyone with intense love, without the idea of agency, without expectation of fruits, reward or even appreciation.

Utilise this body-machine in selfless works. Feel that you are only an instrument in the hands of God, or a witness of nature's activities, when you do karma yoga. Worship God in the poor and the sick. Have no attachment to any place, person or thing. Keep up the mental poise amidst the toil and moil of the world without considerations of success or failure, gain or loss, victory or defeat, respect or disrespect, pleasure or pain. Always have a balanced mind. Have the mind firmly rooted in the Self amidst all activities, then you will become a true karma yogi. Work elevates when done in the right spirit. Even if people scoff at you, revile, beat, kill or taunt you, always be indifferent. Be steady in your sadhana.com

This sadhana demands constant practice, steadfastness, patience, perseverance and endurance. Practice of combined karma and jnana yoga in the world is far more difficult than the practice of pure jnana yoga in a cave of Himalayan retreats. The former yogi will have no tossing of mind, while the latter will be easily disturbed by a little sound or bustle of the city. To keep up meditation while performing actions is a different kind of difficult sadhana. The yogi who keeps up meditation while performing actions is a powerful yogi indeed. He has a different mind altogether.

People do not want to remove impurities by service. They think that service and bhakti are nothing. They at once shave their heads, pure coloured clothes and remain in a cave, posing as great sages or yogis. People study a few books on vedanta and style themselves as on jivanmuktas (one who is liberated in this life). This is a serious mistake. Even if there is one real jivanmukta, he is a great dynamic force to guide the whole world. Some sannyasins of the old orthodox school think that a jivanmukta is without powers. A jivanmukta is a dynamic personality with full powers. He can change or alter the destiny of the whole world.

This is the difference between a worldly-minded man and a trained karma yogi or a sannyasin who works for the uplift of humanity. A karma yogi or a sannyasin works with the feeling of a non- doer and that of a witness only, without attachment or idea of agency and with the strong determination that the world is unreal and is nothing but Atman or Brahman. This work is not work at all, but 'inaction in action'. It will not bring bondage. This fire of wisdom burns all fruits of action. A worldly-minded man works with the idea of I am the doer' and with expectation of fruits, and thinks that this world is a solid reality. This brings on bondage.

A long stay in caves makes a man dull and unfit for energetic, active service of humanity. A recluse is afraid when he sees a big crowd or a bevy of ladies. A little sound throws him out of balance. A recluse in the forest will have to test his real inner strength by occasional visits to the plains, and service of humanity. A proper understanding of the theory of illusion (maya) is very necessary. The present deplorable condition of India is due to lack of right understanding of the theory of illusion. If some occasional batches of sannyasins come out from their retreats and work in the world vigorously in a systematic manner according to their capacity, temperament, and taste, we will indeed have a new and glorious India, full of new religious life with spiritual and moral uplift.

This is a dire need of the present hour. A thorough overhauling of the organisation of this fourth order of life sannyasa is an imperative necessity. Mere social service in some form or other and a little preaching here and there will not bring about satisfactory results. A drastic form of service is the indispensable requisite. How active was Sri Sankara himself, the propounder of the theory of illusion. Look at the magnanimous work turned out by him. He preached against selfish actions only. He was not against selfless actions. He himself was a wonderful karma yogi.

Let us follow in his footsteps and his ideal and remove the wrong impressions that are formed in the minds of our countrymen. It is only can do sannyasins bold who have worked wonders in the past. They wonder now also. They are whole-timed free men. They are full of energy, concentration, strength, purity, and capacity. They have spiritual and ethical powers. They can undoubtedly thrill and electrify the whole world in the twinkling of an eye. Glory, glory to such exalted sannyasins, children of Sri Sankara and Dattatreya, the real spiritual kings, and spiritual teachers of the three worlds. May their blessings be upon us all. May the sannyasins guide and enlighten the people who are sunk hopelessly and deplorably in the mire of worldly existence. May the householders get their spiritual instructions with full feeling and faith and serve the sannyasins with great care and sincerity.

Live Up to Your Ideal

You should have your own ideal in life and should try hard to accomplish it. People vary in their capacities, mental and intellectual calibre, and in physical and mental strength to do things. Therefore, different people should have different ideals. Then only can they evolve quickly; then alone will they realize sure and rapid progress. The ideal of one man will not suit another man. If one keeps an ideal that he cannot realize, that is beyond his reach and capacity, he will get disappointment. He will give up his effort and become dull and lazy.

You may realize your ideal this moment or after ten years with faltering steps. It does not matter much how long it takes. Every man should endeavour his level best to live up to his ideal. He should put his whole energy, nerve force and will into its realization. You can chalk out your own ideal according to your own standard. If you are unable to do this, your guide will select for you the ideal that is suitable to your capacity and standard.

One man may say: “I will teach the village boys and will give them free education. This is my ideal in life."

Another may say: "I will serve sick people and nurse them carefully. I will join any institution that serves humanity and render free service till the end of my life. Service of the sick is my ideal."

A third man may say: "I will beg from door to door and start a kitchen for feeding sadhus and sannyasins. This is my ideal.”

A fourth man may say: “My ideal is Self-realization. I will go to Gangotri and live in a cave and do intense meditation. This is my ideal.”

All are quite correct according to their capacity and standard. You must gradually bring the ideal to the realization of God or Brahman. The highest ideal is Self-realization. Service, worship, etc., eventually result in the realization of the inner Self.

The ideal to have ethical perfection is just below the ideal of Self- realization, but this will lead to Self-realization. Self-realization is the greatest ideal in life. It is the most difficult of all ideals to fulfil. One who attempts Self-realization does the best service to mankind.

One should not treat a man who has a low ideal, with contempt. He may be a baby-soul who is just crawling on the moral and spiritual path. Your duty is to help him in all possible ways in the realization or accomplishment of his ideal. You should give him all sorts of encouragement in his sincere endeavour to live up to his own highest ideal.

It is deplorable to note that the vast majority of persons have no ideal at all. Even educated persons do not cherish any ideal. They lead an aimless life and therefore drift hither and thither like a piece of straw. They make no progress in life. Is this not a very sad plight? Highly lamentable indeed! It is very difficult to get a human birth and yet people do not realize the importance of keeping up an ideal and living up to it. The ideal of 'eat, drink and be merry' is adopted by the Epicureans, gluttons and rich people. This school of thought has countless followers and the number is increasing by leaps and bounds daily. This is the ideal of the diabolical. This ideal will lead a man to the darkest regions of misery and sorrow

Blessed is the man who keeps up an ideal and struggles hard to live up to it, for he will soon attain God-consciousness. Glory unto sincere struggling souls!

Transform Your Karma Into Yoga

The round of domestic duties has to be transformed into a spiritual process. It should be part of your sadhana. By a spiritualisation of your essential attitude and your inward emotional relation to it, you can divinise the work. The same framework of external physical attitude will continue, but the work idea in it will disappear and in its stead there will remain worship. Work is transmuted into worship through your spiritual approach and attitude towards it.

The earnest votary of the holy path of karma yoga is a centre wherein the divine shakti acts and works in a mysterious manner. In and through him, the Lord's dynamic power manifests gloriously. Sincerity, devotion, and earnestness will make the divine work well established, though it is slow in the beginning. It is the steady progress that counts.

To a devotee and seeker, all acts become sacred. His entire life constitutes worship of the divine spirit, which he beholds in and through all external forms and which he knows to be the very inner essence in all things that exist. Recognise and realise the worshipfulness of life's activities through all aspects of thy being. By and by all things will become propitious to you.

Offer your selfless work as an incense to the Lord. This is the right spirit in which you will have to do every work. All good works are godly. Whatever little you do, do it with loving attention. The work is really His. Feel that God is ever with you and always work in the company of God. See God in all. There is nothing small or great or not sacred in any type of work.

Distribute Knowledge: The Highest Service

Ignorant man foolishly imagines that knowledge comes from without. It is a sad mistake. All knowledge comes from within. This external universe is nothing. It is a mere drop or dot in the infinite. It is like the footprint of a calf. What you get from outside is a simple suggestion or external stimulus. The whole magazine of knowledge is within, in the Atman or the Self. Atman is the storehouse for knowledge. An external suggestion strikes against the source and causes ignition, and knowledge flashes out. All spiritual and yoga practices aim at removing the veil only. When the veil is removed, when the curtain drops, when the sheaths are torn asunder, the seeker shines in divine glory. He gets knowledge of the Self. The whole mystery liberation, the whole knowledge of Atman is revealed like a fruit in the hand.

The greatest help or service you can do to the world is the imparting of knowledge of the Self. Spiritual help is the highest help you can render to mankind. The root cause of human sufferings is ignorance. If you can remove this ignorance in man, then only can he be eternally happy. That sage who tries to remove the ignorance is the highest benefactor in the world.

If you remove the hunger of man by giving food, it is only temporary physical help. It is removal of physical want for three hours. Then the hunger again manifests. The man remains in the same miserable state. Building of hospitals, dharamsalas and kitchens for distribution of free food, clothes, etc. Are not the highest kind of help. Miseries are not eradicated. The world will continue to remain in a miserable state, even if you build millions of hospitals and feeding places.

Get knowledge of the Self, distribute this knowledge everywhere and remove the ignorance in man. Then only all kinds of miseries, tribulations and evils can be completely eliminated.

ACTION AND INACTION IN THE BHAGAVAD GITA

The Wheel of the Universe

The basic foundation of the world order is mutuality and healthy co-operation. No one should disturb its equilibrium, and interfere with its working. Man is not brought here to amass wealth by illegal means for himself and his children. Nor should he remain an idler, nor act selfishly, nor refuse to work. He must perform his allotted work.

This whole world is like a big factory of God. The main wheel revolves. From it belts are attached to other wheels and machines. Each small part or machine does its own allotted work. Man must serve others. He is part of the cycle and must perform his assigned task like the other parts.

If a man does not follow the wheel of the universe thus revolving, if he leads a sensual life of absolute selfishness, he is simply wasting his life. He is a mere burden on earth. He is committing great sin indeed.

A jnani who rests in his own essential nature, who rejoices in the Self within, who is satisfied in his Self and who is also contented in the Self, has nothing to do. He is not bound to do anything to keep up wheel of the world. He is one in whom all desires have been gratified. The He has done everything. He has obtained everything. For him there is no interest whatsoever in what is done or what is not done. He will not lose anything by inaction; he has nothing to gain by action; he need not exert. He has no particular object in view. He need not depend upon anybody, he is quite independent.

Karma yoga is not meant for the jnani, the knower of the Self. Though he does not work or serve society physically, he does help the world mentally and spiritually. Relation with the world for the jnani depends purely upon his prarabdha. One jnani may do a great deal of worldly activity in society, while another may remain quiet in a cave.

The quiet jnani is an embodiment of Vedic teachings. His very life is a living assurance for others. Aspirants draw inspiration from him. His powerful spiritual vibrations purify the world and elevate others. Those who are thirsty after divine knowledge are bathed by the magnetic currents of a silent jnani. His powerful thoughts travel a long distance and penetrate into the corners of the different parts of the world. Nature will certainly utilise the merits and attainments of the silent jnani. Just as the sweet fragrance of the jasmine is wafted in the air, so also the fame of the jnani spreads far and wide, and people resort to his abode. They get instructions from him. This is more solid work. Real aspirants are benefited. Curiosity-mongers can have no access to him, they do not want these higher spiritual teachings. In fact it is this silent jnani who does more substantial work than the platform lecturers. Psychologists and occultists can very well understand the truth of this statement. Workers in the political and social fields whose minds are saturated with worldly samskaras and tendencies cannot comprehend the veracity of this statement.

The Lord of this world is at the back of all activities. Without Him even an atom or leaf cannot move even a fraction of an inch. He is the true actor. The individuals are simply the media of this activity.

"*There is nothing in the three worlds, O Partha, that should be done by Me, nor anything unattained that might be attained; yet I engage myself in action. For, should I not engage Myself in action, unwearied, men would in every way follow My path, O Arjuna. The world would fall into ruin if I did not perform action. I should be the author of confusion of castes, and destruction of these beings. As the ignorant act from attachment to action, O Bharata, so should the wise act without attachment, desiring the welfare of the*

world. Let no wise man unsettle the minds of the ignorant attached to action, but acting in harmony with Me, let him render all action attractive." (111:22-26)

The wise should set an example to the masses. They should workfor the uplift of the world. Janaka and others verily aimed at liberation by doing selfless and disinterested works. Man is a creature of imitation. He tries to follow the example of his superiors. Whatsoever a great man does, that other men also do. The standard of right and wrong he sets up by his own conduct, by that the common masses go.

Action and Inaction

Lord Krishna says, "What is action, what is inaction? Even the wise are herein perplexed. I will declare to thee the action by knowing which thou shalt be freed from evil." (IV:16)

"*He who seeth inaction in action and action in inaction, he is wise among men, he is harmonious even while performing all action." (IV:18)*

The Self is actionless. The body and the senses perform action. The actions of the body and the senses are falsely and wrongly attributed by the ignorant to the actionless Self. Therefore the ignorant man thinks 'I act'. He thinks that the Self is the doer or the action. This is a mistake. This is ignorance. Agent of the

It is the idea of agency, the idea 'I am the doer' that binds man to samsara or worldly existence. If this idea vanishes, action is no action at all. It will not bind one to samsara. If you stand as a spectator or silent witness of Nature's activities, feeling 'Nature does everything; I am non-doer', if you identify yourself with the actionless Self, no matter what work or how much of it is done, action is no action at all. This is inaction in action. By such a practice and feeling, action loses its binding nature.

In common parlance action means 'movement of the body, movement of the hands and feet' and inaction means to 'sit quiet. A man may sit quietly, he may not do anything, but if he has the idea of agency or doership, or if he thinks that he is the doer, he is ever doing action even though he is sitting quietly. This is action in inaction. The restless mind will ever be doing actions even though one sits quietly. Actions of the mind are real actions.

Inaction also induces the feeling of egoism. The inactive man says "I sit quietly, I do nothing" Inaction, like action, is wrongly attributed to the Self.

When a steamer moves, the trees on the shore appear to move in the opposite direction to a man who is on the steamer. Moving objects that are very far away appear to be motionless. Even so, in the case of the Self, inaction is mistaken for action and action for inaction.

Just as the motion does not really belong to the trees on the shore, so also action does not really pertain to the Self. This ignorance, which is the main cause of birth and death, vanishes when you attain Self-realisation.

A sage performs actions only with a view to set an example to the masses. Though he works, he does nothing as he has no selfish interests

His actions are burnt by the fire of wisdom which consists in the realisation of inaction in action, through the knowledge of the Self, or Brahma-jnana. This is a mighty spiritual fire which consumes the results of

all kinds of actions (karma), good and bad, and makes the enlightened sage quite free from the bonds of action.

Just as a seed burnt in the fire cannot germinate, so also the karmas or actions burnt by the fire of knowledge of the Self cannot produce future birth.

"*To one who is devoid of attachment, who is liberated, whose mind is established in knowledge, who works for the sake of sacrifice (for the sake of God), the whole action is dissolved." (IV:23)*

When ordinary people see a sage doing something they think that he is also a doer of actions, an agent, active and therefore bound. This is a mistake. From his own point of view and in truth, he is not an agent at all. He really does no action at all. He feels and says, "I do nothing at all. Nature does, or the three qualities of Nature do everything." He is not affected by heat and cold, pleasure and pain, success and failure as he always has a balanced state of mind. He is not attached even to the things which are necessary for the bare maintenance of his body. He experiences neither pleasure nor pain, whether or not he obtains food and the other things which are required for the maintenance of his body. The reason is that he is resting in his essential nature as existence-knowledge-bliss absolute (satchidananda-swarupa); he is swimming in the ocean of bliss. So he does not care for his body and its needs.

"Brahman is the oblation; Brahman is the melted butter (ghee); by Brahman is the oblation poured into the fire of Brahman; Brahman verily shall be reached by him who always sees Brahman in action." (IV:24).

This is jnana-yajna or wisdom-sacrifice wherein the idea of Brahman is substituted for the ideas of the instrument and other accessories of action, the idea of action itself and of its results. By entertaining such an idea the whole action melts away.

When one attains to the knowledge of the Self, or Self-realisation, his whole life becomes a wisdom-sacrifice in which the oblation, the melted butter or the offering, the performer of the sacrifice, the action and the goal are all Brahman. He who meditates thus wholly upon Brahman shall verily attain to Brahman.

The sage who has the knowledge of the Self knows that the oblation the fire the instrument by which the melted butter is poured into the fire and he himself have no existence apart from that of Brahman. He who has realised through direct cognition that all is Brahman, does no action even if he performs actions.

When a man regards the action as if it were for him, he has 'action-mentality', and when he treats it as God-ordained and for God, he being just a spectator, he has 'inaction-mentality'

If an action is done without expectation, as worship of God, then it is no action at all. It is 'inaction in action'. If you identify yourself with Brahman and stand as a witness of the activities of Nature and its effects, mind, the senses and the body, you will realize 'inaction in action?

Brahman is without action, He is non-doer and without limbs, but He is the primum mobile. He gives a push, and Nature moves and acts. He gazes, and Nature moves and acts. Without His presence Nature cannot do anything. Therefore it is Brahman only who really does all actions. This is 'action in inaction' as taught in the Bhagavad Gita.

Action and Actor

"Action performed as duty, without attachment, without love or hate, without desire for fruit, is called pure (sattoic)." (XVIII:23)

The performer of pure action experiences great joy. He does his duty or any other work wholeheartedly, not caring for the reward but offering it willingly at the feet of the Lord. He works in accordance with the dictates of the scriptures.

"*But that action which is done by one longing for pleasures, or again with quim, or with much effort, is declared to be passionate (rajasic)." (XVIII:24)*

A passionate man performs various selfish actions. He boasts of his actions in public, Passion prompts him to do them. He can never work without expectation of a reward. He expects pleasures as fruits of action.

"*The action performed under delusion and without regard to the capacity and consequences, loss and injury to others, is declared to be dark (tamasie)" (XVIII:25)*

Tamasic acts cause harm to others. A tamasic man reflects not at all whether he has the capacity to perform these useless actions, but continues to act blindly. With utter thoughtlessness he sets aside any reflection as to the difficulty of performing the action and what the result of it would be. He carries on in his own egoistical manner. He does not discriminate between the good and the bad, or what is one's own and what belongs to another.

"Free from attachment, not egoistic, endowed with firmness and enthusiasm, unaffected in success and failure, that actor is called pure (sattvic)," (XVIII:26)

A pure agent does his actions with his whole heart without feelin g proud at the performance. He looks for the proper time and place and in accordance with the behests of the scriptures determines whether such actions are worth doing or not. He develops courage and a powerful will. He never seeks physical comforts. He is quite prepared to sacrifice his life for a noble cause. He is neither elated by success nor grieved by failure. He always keeps a balanced mind when he does any action. O Arjuna, that man is a pure agent who, while working exhibits such qualities.

"*Passionate and desiring to attain the fruit of actions, greedy, cruel, impure, moved by joy and sorrow, such an actor is said to be passionate (rajasic)." (XVIII:27)*

A passionate agent is the abode of sins and of greed of the whole world. Wherever he imagines that he may gain worldly fruit he will strive whole-heartedly to obtain it. Whatsoever he gains he keeps strictly to himself and his family. If he attains the fruits of his actions he rejoices. If he fails in his attempt he is overcome by grief.

"Fickle, cheating, vulgar, stubborn, malicious, indolent, despondent and procrastinating, such an actor is said to be dark (tamasic)." (XVIII:28)

Owing to his vulgar nature, the lazy man is not able to discriminate between proper and improper actions. His heart is filled with vanity. He is very stiff and unbending in his demeanour. He is the very embodiment of deceit, the abode of the passion for gambling and all such vices. He is ever ready to do evil actions. When an opportunity for his doing good occurs he is utterly slothful and inactive, but he is very alert in doing evil.

Prakriti Does Everything

Prakriti (Nature) only does all actions. It is the gunas (qualities born of nature) that operate. Owing to ignorance the body is mistaken for the Self. Egoism of man asserts at every step, nay, at every second. Just as the motion of the clouds is falsely attributed to the sun, so also the movements of the body and the senses are falsely attributed to the Self. The Self is always silent and is the witness of all actions. You will find in the Bhagavad Gita: "*All actions are done by the qualities of nature only. He whose mind is deluded by egoism thinks: I am the doer." (III:27)* This is the cause of bondage. The gunas only do all actions. The ignorant man identifies himself, through the force of ignorance, with his body, mind and senses which are the products or effects of the three gunas- sattva, rajas and tamas. Now comes the trouble. If he thinks: I am the doer', he has to enjoy the good and bad fruits of his actions.

He who sees that Nature performs all actions and that the Self is actionless, really sees. The wise man who knows the essence of the divisions of the qualities and functions, holding that 'the qualities move amidst the qualities', is not attached. He separates himself from the body, mind and organs. He stands as a witness by identifying himself with the pure inner Self or Atman.

"*But he, O mighty-armed, who knows the essence of the divisions of the qualities and functions, holding that the qualities move amid the qualities, is not attached." (III:28)*

"*I do not do anything' should think the harmonised one, who knows the essence of things. Seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving, sleeping breathing, speaking, giving, grasping, opening and closing the eyes, he holds: "The senses move among the objects of the senses!" (V:8*,9)

This is the vision or determination of a jnani. He escapes from the bondage of karmas. He is freed from the wheel of birth and death. "*The Lord of the world produces not the ideas of agency, nor actions, nor union together of actions and their fruit, nature, however, manifests." (V:14) "He who sees that prakriti verily performs all actions, and that the Self is actionless, he sees." (XIII:29)*

"When the seer perceives no agent other than the qualities and knows That which is higher than the qualities, he enters into My nature." (XIV.19)

The man who is deluded by egoism identifies the Self with the body, mind, prana and the senses, and ascribes to the Self all the attributes of the body and the senses. He therefore thinks, through ignorance, 'I am the doer'. In reality the gunas of nature perform all action.

Scope for Personal Exertion

In the Bhagavad Gita you will find: *"Even the man of knowledge acts in conformity with his own nature; beings follow nature; what shall restraint avail (III:33)*

The meaning of this sloka is misunderstood by many people. Many have become fatalists. They lead a life of inertia. They say: "What is the use of our exertion? Nature is all-in-all. We cannot go against nature. Nature is irresistable. All living beings follow their own nature. There is influence of man's nature on his conduct. What can coercion and inhibition do? Let us not exert ourselves." This is a sad mistake. It is a lamentable misapprehension.

There is a clear solution for this in the next sloka. These two should go together, then the meaning is quite clear. Even the man of knowledge or a jnani behaves according to his own nature. It needs no saying that a man of ignorance acts according to his own nature, because he does not know how to control it. If every individual behaves according to his own nature only, if there is none who has no nature of his own, then there is no scope for individual exertion. In that case the teachings of the scriptures which inspire people to right exertion would be quite purposeless.

In the next verse Lord Krishna asks Arjuna to exert to go above the two currents of attraction and repulsion. "Affection and aversion for the objects of the senses abide in the senses, let none come under their sway; for they are his foes." (III:34) If the aspirant has controlled these two modifications of the mind (vrittis), he has already conquered Nature, he has become the lord of Nature. He can command Nature. Nature has become his obedient servant. Nature operates through these two. What you call the universe is only attraction and aversion. There is no world apart from these. There is no world for that jnani or yogi who has subdued these. Man is bound or attached to sensual objects through attraction. When he develops dispassion, attraction is annihilated. An ignorant man is a slave of these two and so he is tossed about hither and thither like a straw in this ocean of samsara. Patanjali Maharishi prescribes easy definite methods in his Yoga Sutras to control these two vrittis. His definition of yoga is:

Yogas chitta vritti nirodhah

"*Yoga is control or restraint of the modifications of the mind.*"

Yoga Sutras (1:2)

He also prescribes self-effort to extirpate vrittis and control nature and to attain liberation or independence. He does not say: "Nature is very powerful, keep quiet and become a slave of nature. What is the use of your struggle and sadhana?" His yoga is an exact science. He prescribes definite, positive, accurate and effective methods to control nature. He says: "Control the vrittis and then rest in your own essential nature. The whole nature is under your control."

Through attraction a man loves an object; through aversion he dislikes an object. If anyone rises above the sway of likes and dislikes, love and hatred, affection and aversion, he is no longer subject to his nature. He can understand the teachings of the scriptures. His mind is pure. If he becomes a victim of these two currents, his mind becomes impure. He cannot understand the significance of the scriptures. He neglects his own duties. He begins to do the duties of others, as his mind is in a state of confusion and bewilderment. Likes and dislikes are great obstacles in the spiritual path. They are the adversaries of an aspirant. They are like robbers on the highway. If discrimination and enquiry of the nature of the Atman dawn in the aspirant, they will take to their heels.

You will find in the Bhagavad Gita: "*But the disciplined self, moving among sense-objects with senses free from attraction and repulsion, mastered by the self, goes to peace." (II:64)* The difficulty that you encountered in verse 33 is not obviated. Exert now. Remove likes and dislikes and rest in peace. Then Nature becomes your obedient servant. You are the master of lord of Nature. Do sadhana. Exert! Practise! Realize!

Karma Yoga and Renunciation

Arjuna said to Lord Krishna: "*Renunciation of actions, O Krishna, Thou praisest, and again yoga. Tell me conclusively that which is the better of the two."*

The Lord said: "Renunciation and the yoga of action both lead to the highest bliss, but of the two, the yoga of action is superior. He should be known as a perpetual sannyasi who neither hates nor desires; for, free from the pairs of opposites, O mighty-armed Arjuna, he is easily set free from bondage. Children, not the wise, speak of knowledge and the yoga of action or the performance of action as though they are distinct and different; he who is truly established in one obtains the fruit of both. That place which is reached by the men of knowledge is reached by the yogis (karma yogis). He sees who sees knowledge and the performance of action as one. But renunciation, O mighty-armed Arjuna, is hard to attain without yoga; the yoga-harmonised sage quickly goes to Brahman. He who is devoted to the path of action, whose mind is quite pure, who has conquered the self, who has subdued his senses and who realises his Self as the Self in all beings, though acting he is not tainted. He who does actions, offering them to Brahman and abandoning attachment, is not tainted by sin, just as a lotus leaf is not tainted by water. Yogis, having abandoned attachment, perform actions only by the body, mind, intellect and even by the senses, for the purification of the self" (V:1-7,10,11)

The yogi who does actions without egoism and attachment to results or fruits of the actions, which he regards as offerings unto the Lord, is not tainted by the actions. He has no attachment even for liberation. He sees inaction in action. All his actions are burnt in the fire of wisdom. He escapes from the wheel of samsara (worldly existence). He is freed from the round of births and deaths. He gets purity of heart, and through purity of heart attains to the knowledge of the Self. Through the knowledge of the Self he is liberated. This is the of the above verses.

"The harmonised man, having abandoned the fruits of action attains to the eternal peace; the non-harmonised, impelled by desire, attached to the fruit, is bound. Mentally renouncing all actions, and self-controlled, the embodied one rests happily in the nine-gated city, neither acting nor causing others (body and senses) to act." (V: 12, 13)

The man who has controlled the senses renounces all actions by discrimination, by seeing inaction in action, and rests happily in this body of nine openings (the nine-gated city), because he is free from cares, worries, anxieties and fear, his mind is quite calm and he enjoys the supreme peace of the Eternal. In this nine-gated city the Self is the king. The senses, the mind, the subconscious mind and the intellect are the inhabitants or subjects. The ignorant worldly man says, "I am resting in this easy chair." The man of wisdom who has realised that the Self is distinct from the body which is a product of the five elements, says "I am resting in this body"*.*

"Neither agency nor actions does the Lord create for the world, nor union with the fruits of actions. But it is Nature that acts. The Lord takes neither the demerit nor even the merit of any; knowledge is enveloped by ignorance, thereby all beings are deluded." (V:14,15)

"Arjuna said to Lord Krishna: *I desire to know severally, O mighty-armed, the essence or truth of renunciation, as also of abandonment."*

"The Lord said: 'Sages have known renunciation as the renouncing of works with desire; the relinquishing of the fruit of all actions is called relinquishment by the wise. Some philosophers declare that action should

be abandoned as an evil; while others declare that acts of sacrifice, gift and austerity should not be relinquished Hear from Me the conclusion or the final truth about this abandonment, O best of the Bharatas; abandonment, verily, O best of men, has been declared to be of three kinds. Acts of sacrifice, gift and austerity should not be abandoned, but should be performed; sacrifice, gift and also austerity are the purifiers of the wise. But even these actions should be performed leaving aside attachment and the desire for rewards, of O Arjuna, this is my certain and best conviction. Verily the renunciation e obligatory action is not proper; the abandonment of the same from delusion i declared to be tamasic. He who abandons action on account of fear of bodily trouble (because it is painful) does not obtain the merit of renunciation by doing such rajasic renunciation. Whatever obligatory action is done, O Arjuna, merely because it ought to be done, abandoning attachment and also the desire for reward, that renunciation is regarded as sattvic (pure)" (XVIII:1-10)

All actions are equally welcome to the man of renunciation. He is not affected by either pleasure or pain. He is not elated at performing pleasant actions nor does he find unpleasantness when he does disagreeable actions. He does not hate the latter, nor is he attached to the former. Neither has he aversion to painful actions nor attraction to pleasant ones. As he has no attachment to any action or its rewards, he will do any action for the welfare of all beings.

"Verily, it is not possible for an embodied being to abandon actions entirely,but he who relinquishes the rewards of actions is verily called a man of renunciation." (XVIII:11)

He who has assumed a human body and yet grumbles at having to perform actions is verily a fool. Can fire that is endowed with heat as its natural property ever think of getting rid of it? So long as you are living in this body you cannot entirely relinquish action. Lord Krishna says to Arjuna: "*Nor can anyone even for an instant remain actionless; for helplessly is everyone driven to action by the qualities born of Nature." (III:5)* Nature (and your own nature, too) will urge you to do actions. You will have to abandon the idea of agency and the fruits of actions. Then you are quite safe. No action will bind you.

The ignorant man who identifies himself with the body and who thinks that he is himself the doer of all actions should not abandon actions. It is impossible for him to relinquish actions. He will have to perform all the prescribed duties while relinquishing their fruits.

The renunciation of all actions is possible only for him who has attained Self-realisation and who is, therefore, merely a wearer of the body, i.e., does not think that the body is the Self.

"The three-fold fruit of action (good, evil and mixed) accrues after death to the non-relinquisher, but never to the relinquisher." (XVIII:12)

Agreeable and Disagreeable Actions

"*The man of renunciation, pervaded by purity, intelligent, and with his doubts cut asunder, does not hate a disagreeable work nor is he attached to an agreable one." (XVIII:10)*

When a man practises karma yoga, when he abandons attachment to action and desire for its reward and performs actions vigorously, his heart is filled with purity, and through purity of heart he knows himself to be the immutable actionless Self. He attains devotion to the knowledge of the Self, and freedom.

He will not think that prohibited actions which bind an ignorant man will be unfavourable to him. He will never think that they will bind him if he has to perform them, because he is above good and evil, virtue and vice, right and wrong. He has no idea of agency. This does not mean that

He will do wrong actions. As his will is one with the cosmic Will, whatever action he performs will be in accordance with the scriptures. He will never deviate even a fraction of an inch from the rules of the scriptures. The Lord alone works through his mind and senses as he has no individual will. Likes and dislikes are the motives that induce a worldly man to actions. As they are absent in a sage, he can renounce the fruits of all actions and action as well. As the ocean remains calm amidst stormy waves, even so a sattvic man remains calm amidst adverse or stormy conditions of life. He recognises that the happenings of life are inevitable. He acts in a variety of ways but is not disturbed as he has a balanced and disciplined mind.

He does not have hatred for unpleasant or disagreeable action that brings physical suffering, danger or unlucky results or untoward consequences, when it is the work that should be done. He accepts such work also with a willing heart, and works with heart and soul. He has a profound and comprehensive understanding of its need and meaning also.

Self-Surrender

"*Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give, whatever you practise as austerity, O Arjuna, do it as an offering unto Me" (IX:27)* Consecrate all acts to the Lord. Then you will be freed from the bondage of karma. You will have freedom in action. He who tries to live in the spirit of this verse will be able to do self-surrender unto the Lord. Gradually he ascends the spiritual path step by step. His greedy nature is slowly dissolved. He always gives. He is not eager take. His whole life with all its actions, thoughts and feelings, is dedicated to the service of the Lord eventually. He lives for the Lord only. He works for the Lord only. There is not a bit of egoism. His whole nature is transformed into divinity. When actions are dedicated to the Lord, there is no

Rebirth for you. This is the simplest method of yoga. Do not waste your time a longer. Take it up from today. All actions, all results and all rewards y go to the Lord. There is no separate living for the individual. Just as the river joins the sea, abandoning its own name and form, so also the individual soul joins the Supreme Soul, giving up his own name and form, his own egoistic desires and egoism. The individual will becomes one with the cosmic Will. Any will

"*Fix thy mind on me, be devoted to Me, prostrate thyself before Me harmonised thus in the Self, thou shalt come unto Me, having Me as the supreme goal." (IX:34)*

The ideas that are contained in Sloka 34 of chapter nine are repeated in verse 65 of chapter thirteen. But there is the word of assurance given by Lord Krishna to Arjuna in the second half of verse 65, chapter eighteen: "*Truly do I promise unto thee, for thou art dear to Me" The Lord further says: "Abandoning all duties, come unto Me alone for shelter Sorrow not, I will liberate thee from all sins." (XVIII:66) And again: "Flee unto Him for shelter, O Bharata; by His grace thou shalt obtain supreme peace, the ever- lasting dwelling place." (XVIII:62)*

"He who does all actions for Me, who looks upon Me as the Supreme, who is devoted to Me, who is free from attachment, who bears enmity towards no creature, he comes to Me, O Arjuna." (XI:55) This verse

contains the summary of the entire philosophy of the Gita. It is the essence of the whole teaching. He who practises this teaching will attain supreme bliss and immortality. He who performs actions (duties) for the sake of the Lord, who consecrates all his actions to Him, who serves the Lord with his heart and soul, who regards the Lord as his supreme goal, who lives for Him alone, who works for Him alone, who sees the Lord in everything, who sees the whole world as the cosmic form of the Lord and therefore cherishes no feeling of hatred or enmity towards any creature even when great injury has been done by others to him, who has no attachment or love for wealth, children, wife, friends and relatives, and who seeks nothing else but the Lord, realises Him and enters into His being. He becomes one with Him.

"*Restraining and subduing the senses, regarding everything with equal vision, rejoicing in the welfare of all, these also come to Me. If also thou art not equal to constant practice, be intent in My service, performing all action for My sake, thou shall attain perfection." (XII:4,10)*

"Though ever performing all actions, take refuge in Me; by My grace you shall obtain the eternal indestructible abode. Renouncing mentally all works in Me, intent on Me, resorting to the yoga of discrimination, fix thy mind on Me. The Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings, O Arjuna, and by His illusive power causes all beings to revolve, as though mounted on a potter's wheel." (XVIII:56,57,61)

SVADHARMA

What is Svadharma?

There is no proper equivalent in English for the Sanskrit term ‘dharma. It is generally rendered as ‘duty’ or ‘righteousness’. Any action that is best calculated to bring liberation and exaltation is dharma. That which brings well-being to human beings is dharma. That which secures preservation of being is dharma. Dharma is extremely subtle, intricate and complex – even sages are perplexed. The word ‘dharma’ comes from the root ‘dhri’ which means ‘to support’ or ‘to hold on’

‘Svadharma’ means one’s own duty in accordance with one’s caste and order of life, which are founded according to the qualities born of the nature of man.

God, religion and dharma are inseparable. Man evolves through the practice of dharma according to his caste and order of life, and eventually attains Self-realization the ultimate goal of life - which brings infinite bliss, supreme peace, unbroken joy, highest knowledge, eternal satisfaction and immortality.

The mark of dharma is good conduct. Higher than all the teachings is good conduct. From that, dharma is born; and dharma enhances life. By good conduct man attains fame, power and strength here and hereafter. It is the highest dharma and the root of all austerity.

The Caste System

The four castes in Indian society are brahmana, kshatriya, vaishya and sudra.

“*Self-restraint, serenity, patience, austerity, purity, belief in God, forgiveness, self-sacrifice, uprightness, truthfulness, wisdom, teaching and studying the Vedas, doing sacrifices and also guiding others in offering sacrifices and gifts and receiving gifts, are the duties of a brahmana born of his own nature.” (XVIII:42)*

“Courage, generosity, vigour, prowess, splendour, firmness, dexterity, not fleeing from battle, the nature of a ruler, protection of the people, gifts, doing sacrifices and study of the Vedas are the duties of a kshatriya born of his own nature.” (XVIII:43)

“Ploughing, protection of cattle, trade, charity, doing sacrifice, study of the Vedas, engaging in commerce, finance and agriculture are the duties of a vaishya, born of his own nature. To serve ungrudgingly all these castes is the duty of a sudra, born of his own nature.” (XVIII:44)

Much of the evil in this system has grown through men of one caste grasping at the work of the other castes, and thinking more of the rights his caste gives him than of the duties it imposes.

The brahmana and kshatriya have claimed their privileges ardently and have shrunk from the heavy burden belonging to their castes. Naturally their attitude has provoked opposition, and antagonism has replaced mutual goodwill and service. Consequently caste has become a social bitterness, instead of being a framework maintaining all in happy order. If people of different castes practise their dharmas, caste confusion will pass away and abundant peace and joy will prevail.

Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita: “The four castes were created by Me, by the different distribution of qualities and actions; know Me to be the author of them, though actionless and inexhaustible.” (IV:13)

Throughout the world this classification of caste exists. The catholic priests and the reverend clergymen represent the brahmins. They do meditation and preaching. The soldiers of the West are the kshatriyas. The business people in the West are the vaishyas. Those who do menial service are the sudras. (This classification is according to the quality of man.) Those who are sattvic are brahmins; those who are rajasic are kshatriyas; those who are tamasic are the sudras. (This classification is according to gunas and karma.)

The Four Stages of Life

The ashramas or stages in life are four: brahmacharya, the stage of studentship; grihastha, the stage of householdership; vanaprastha, the stage of forest-dwelling or seclusion; and sannyasa, the order of total renunciation. Each order of life has its own duties. In none of these stages must a man grasp at the special duties of the other three. At the present moment it is difficult to maintain or observe the exact details of the ancient rules, as the conditions have changed very much, but if we can have a clear idea of the fundamental duties of each, we shall still be able to shape life to a regulated course of development and steady growth.

The life of the student or brahmachari is described in the Manu Smriti: “Let the student ever engage in the study of the Vedas and in doing service to his preceptor. Let him refrain from wine, meat, tasty dishes, perfumes, garlands, company of women, and from injury to sentient creatures. Let him give up hut anger, greed, dancing, singing and playing on musical instruments, dice-play gossip, slander and untruth.

“Let the student always sleep alone and let him not waste his seed; he who from lust destroyed his seed, destroyed his vow. He should develop the spirit of service, humility and obedience. He should mould his character properly. He should be chaste in thought, word and deed.”

A brahmachari should study religious books till he reaches the age of twenty-five. If he has taken the vow of life-long celibacy to become a life-long brahmachari he need not enter the stage of a householder. He can devote his whole life to spiritual pursuits. He should have real lasting dispassion and discrimination. Then only will he be really benefited.

If he does not want life-long brahmacharya, after finishing his duties the student enters the order of grihastha, when he is ready to take up the duties and responsibilities of the householder’s life. Of all ashramas, that of the householder is the highest, as it verily supports the other three. Herein he can help the brahmachari, the vanaprasthi and the sannyasin. If one leads a well regulated household life, there is no need for sannyasa. Most sannyasins are failures in their household life and therefore they had to take to sannyas. A disciplined householder is better than a sannyasin. Living in this world with all its responsibilities, he lives a religious life.

So, remaining as a householder, one should help the sannyasins, help the poor, nurse the sick. These are the virtues that householders should practise. One-tenth of income should be set apart for helping the poor. Thus 3 you can grow in spirituality and attain God-realisation in your own house.

Eknath and Guru Nanak were householders. Lord Rama and Lord Krishna were householders. Therefore, marriage is no hindrance spirituality and God-realisation. You must live a life of detachment, prayerfulness, worshipfulness, meditation, realisation, aspiration and renunciation. You should not think that when y you to Hardwar and do sadhana. You must start your quest for God- you retire realisation

even now. When you are young the mind is very pliable. Samskaras can be easily formed. A little meditation, a little japa, a little pranayama, a little asana – all these will help you to attain will come

God-realisation. As all the streams and rivers flow to rest in the ocean, so all the ashramas flow to rest in the householder. This is the field for developing various virtues such as mercy, love, generosity, patience, tolerance, purity, prudence and right judgement. The central teaching of the Bhagavad Gita and Yoga Vasistha is that Self-realisation should be attained in and through the world.

If a brahmachari does not want to take up the course of life-long celibacy, he can become a householder. He can marry after finishing his education. He can visit his wife occasionally for bringing progeny to keep up the line and not for sensual gratification. He will be styled as a brahmachari if he strictly adheres to the above rule. After he has finished the stage of a householder and after fixing up his son in a proper position, he can become a vanaprasthi, either alone or with his wife. He should not remain in the house till the end of life. He will be having various anxieties and attachment for children if he remains in the house. If he finds it difficult to leave he can remain in a cottage outside the house. If he finds this also difficult, he can remain upstairs or in a solitary room and can have interviews with the visitors and members of the house in the evening between 4 and 5.

If a vanaprasthi wants to take sannyasa, he can do so. Vanaprastha is only a preparatory step to sannyasa.

The glory and freedom of a sannyasin can hardly be described. A sannyasin only can cut off all sorts of attachments. Otherwise some sort of subtle connection will always remain. When once one takes sannyasa, he becomes a dead man to the family members. Otherwise they always think of getting something from him. The subtle attachment in the mind still remains in both parties. This is quite sufficient to bring one back to the wheel of birth and death. The very colour of the orange robe gives strength and purity. I do not believe those people who say: “We have given colouring to our hearts.” This is timidity and hypocrisy. There are still delusion, attraction and subtle desires lurking in them. If there is internal change the external change is bound to come.

Duties of Man

Man has certain important duties and responsibilities in life. He has to evolve morally and spiritually by performing these duties in the right manner. He has to act and live according to the law of God. He has to find out the rules of conduct and the measure of his responsibilities. He must have a thorough knowledge of right and wrong and must act accordingly. Then only can he be rightly called a man.

Man has duties towards parents, children and other family members. He has duties towards society and the country. He has duties to his own self, and, last but not the least, he has important duties towards God. He must fulfil all these duties of his life. Then only he can find progress in his life. Then only will he enjoy real peace of mind.

He must serve his parents who have given him this physical body, with great faith and feeling. In the Taittiriya Upanishad you will find: “The parents should be worshipped as visible representatives of God on earth.” Modern educated people do not pay any proper regard to their parents. If the father is uneducated and if the son is highly-educated, he will say that his father is a servant of the house when anybody puts the question: “Who is this old man?”

He must train his children in the proper manner. He must give them good education in Sanskrit, English and in technical subjects. He must train them in the path of spirituality from their very childhood. He must be devoted to his wife who is his partner in life. No religious rite is valid without her presence. He must regard her as a real helper in the path of spirituality. As soon as a son is born she becomes his mother. He must give up all ideas of relationship as wife as soon as a son is born. He must give up sexual intercourse. Both should lead a spiritual life. The husband should not regard his wife as a machine for procreation only. There is some higher spiritual purpose.

Man must serve society according to his temperament, taste and capacity. This will help in the purification of his mind. He must serve as an honorary member, without any remuneration. He must develop the spirit of patriotism. He must serve the country. Service of the country is pure Mother-worship.

"*Each man devoted to his own duty attains perfection How heatin ption while being engaged in his own duty, hear now" (XVIII:45)*

Your duty is your sole support and the highest service you can render to the Supreme is to carry it out whole-heartedly, without expectation of fruits, with the attitude of dedication to the Lord. This will surely lead you to the Supreme. All the impurities of the mind will be washed away by the performance of one's own duty and you will be fit for Self-knowledge.

"*He from whom all the beings have evolved and by whom all this is pervaded, worshipping Him with his own duty, man attains perfection." (XVIII:46)*

The performance by a man of his own duty is simply carrying into effect the intention of the Supreme from Whom the whole of the creation emanates. When a man worships the Supreme Being with the flowers of his actions, then He is immensely pleased and being thus gratified by such worship He confers dispassion and discrimination on him.

Worship of the Lord through one's duties purifies the heart of the aspirant and prepares him for the devotion to knowledge which eventually leads him to the attainment of Self-realisation. Work ceaselessly for the Lord and surrender the fruits of all actions to Him. Take the Lord as your sole refuge. Live for Him. Work for Him. Serve Him in all forms. Think of Him only. Meditate on Him alone. See Him everywhere. Worship Him in your heart. Consecrate your life, all actions, feelings and thoughts to the Lord. You will rest in Him. You will attain union with Him. You will attain immortal supreme peace and eternal bliss.

The right performance of the duties of any station in life without attachment will bring Self-realisation and liberation. The following anecdote of a pious woman and a butcher illustrate this:

A sannyasin retired into a forest to practise yoga. He remained in a cave for a period of twelve years. He practised pranayama, khechari mudra and various yoga kriyas. He developed some powers through these practices. One day he was sitting under the shade of a tree. A trane was perched upon one of the branches of the tree. It passed He glared at the crane. Some yoga fire at once emanated from the excreta on the head of the sannyasin. The sannyasin became enraged crown of his head and burnt the crane to ashes immediately The sannyasin rejoiced at the marvellous power he possessed.

He went into the city for procuring his usual alms. He called out "Narayana Hari" at the door of a householder. The lady of the house was engaged in nursing her sick husband. She was a very chaste

woman who was very much devoted to her husband. She observed the rules of a chaste wife. She answered from within the room:

"*O Bhikshu, kindly wait a bit*." The sannyasin was very much annoyed. He reflected: 'Look at the arrogant nature of this lady. She has asked me to wait. She is not aware of my yoga powers.'

While he was thinking thus the lady said: "O Bhikshu! There is no crane here. Don't think too much of yourself. Do not be puffed up with your siddhis."

The sannyasin stood in utter amazement. He had to wait quietly At last the lady came outside with alms for him. The sannyasin prostrated at her feet and asked: *"O Devi, how did you manage to read my thoughts?"*

The lady replied: "O Swamiji! I do not know anything of pranayama or any kind of yoga kriya. I made you wait because I was busy attending upon my sick husband. I am an ignorant woman. I am sincerely devoted to my husband. I regard him as my guru and God. I worship him. I don't go to temples. I do not repeat mantras. I serve my husband day and night. I obey his words implicitly. I massage his feet. I walk in the footsteps of Savitri, Nalayani and Anasuya. I sleep after he has slept. I get up in the morning before he arises. He is my all-in-all. Through such service, devotion and duty to my husband I have received illumination. I have a pure heart. I could read your thoughts. This is the secret of my practices. If you want to learn more, go to a butcher who sells meat in the big market. He will teach you something of absorbing interest and importance. You will be highly delighted indeed. You will be immensely benefited."

The sannyasin went straight to the town where the butcher was living. He came direct to the market and found the butcher chopping meat. The sannyasin thought within himself: 'O my Lord! Is this the man from whom I am going to learn something interesting and useful? He is the devil incarnate. He is a ruffian.'

The butcher read the thoughts of the sannyasin and said: "0 Swamiji! Did that lady send you? Kindly take your seat here. I shall attend on you presently." He finished his business with customers and then asked the sannyasin to follow him to his house. He asked him to wait outside and went in and attended to his old father and mother. He gave them a bath, fed them nicely and put them to bed. He then came to the sannyasin and said: "O Swamiji, I am at thy feet now. Kindly order me any service"

The sannyasin asked him some questions on vedanta. The butcher gave him beautiful, soul-stirring replies concerning the Atman, the nature of freedom, sadhana, the state of a jivanmukta, etc. The sannyasin was astonished. Many of his doubts were cleared. He was highly pleased with the butcher. He asked him: "How is it that you are doing this dirty work? How did you manage to get such exalted knowledge?"

The butcher replied: "Swamiji, you are mistaken. No duty or work is impure or degrading. Every work is worship of God. I do my duty well without any attachment or motive. I serve my parents day and night. They are my God on earth. I worship them daily. I do not know any yoga practice, I am not a learned man. I discharge my duties satisfactorily. This is my religion and this is my yoga. I obtained illumination, perfection, purity and freedom through the discharge of my duties as a householder and through the service of my parents. This is the secret of my yoga and Self-realisation."

If a man is endowed with religious inherent tendencies and if due to some obstacles he was not able to realise the summum bonum of life, he is again born in this world with good samskaras and in good environments with God's and guru's grace, and without entering the order of grihastha, he can enter into

sannyas. There have been many such instances and even now there are such instances. Only when there are subtle desires does one have to enter into the household life. If one has discrimination, dispassion, six-fold wealth and intense yearning for liberation, he will never enter the householder's life but he will have double-promotion. He will at once take sannyas even while he is a brahmachari.

An ignorant worldly-minded man says: "I have to do my duties. I have to educate my four sons and three daughters. I have to please my employer. I have heavy duties in the office. I have to remit money to my widowed sister. I have a large family. I have six brothers and five sisters. Where is the time for doing prayer and japa and the study of religious books? There is no time even to breathe. I have no leisure. Even during holidays I have to work. I bring office papers to my home and work at night till eleven. I do not want sannyasa or any yoga. The office work and the maintenance of my family is itself yoga."

Do you call this duty? It is mere slavery, it is bondage. The man's afraid of his superior at every moment. Even in his dreams he meets ha office mates and the employer, and posts figures in the ledger. This a not sense of duty. The man cannot pray even for a second. There is nex a single thought of God even in a month. He takes tea, cats food, sits a the table to write, sleeps and procreates. The entire life passes away like this. This is selfish work. This is not duty, this is work for gain and satisfaction of the lower appetite. Anything done under compulsion and expectation is not duty. You must not interpret slavery as duty. You must not take selfish works that are done through attachment, greed and passion as duty. You will be doing great injustice. This is self- created drudgery.

A clerk or an officer earns money by taking bribes, and when his conscience pricks him he feeds some brahmins and says: "I have done a great duty today. I have fed fifteen brahmins and given ten cents each". This is his idea of duty. He further adds: "Why should I take sannyasa and practise yoga? I will earn lots of money and do charity This is the best kind of life." Poor deluded soul! May God give him good understanding!

The maxim 'Non injury is the highest virtue' cannot be strictly practised by householders. It can be practised by sannyasins who tread the path of renunciation. They will have to practise. If a vagabond enters the house and tries to molest a lady, a housholder cannot keep quiet. He will not say: "I will not resist evil now." He will immediately take a club and give the man a good thrashing. Suppose a lady is in danger. Someone wants to murder her to take away her jewels. She seeks the shelter of a young, strong man for protection. It is the duty of this young man to resist evil and defend her by attacking this cruel man. He cannot say now: "Non-injury is the highest virtue." It is his duty to save the life of the lady by resisting evil. Otherwise he fails in his duty.

There are special dharmas during critical and dangerous circum stances. They are called apta-dharma. Rishi Visvamitra took forbidden meat from an outcaste when there was severe famine and offered this in his sacrifice to the gods.

Morality and duty vary according to circumstances. To resist evil becomes the duty of a man in certain circumstances. The king should always mise his rod of chastisement to keep peace and order in his country. He cannot say: "I will not resist evil." He will fail in the discharge of his duty if he does not punish the wicked, and his country will be in a state of utter chaos. To hang a murderer or a dacoit is non- violence for a king. Violence and non-violence are relative terms. To kill a man who is taking away the lives of many is non-violence .

To shoot a dog or a horse that is suffering from acute agony that cannot be alleviated, is non-violence for a European. He wants to free the dog from pain. His motive is good. However a sannyasin should not defend himself even when his life is in danger. A sannyasin is one who has no body and who identifies himself with the Atman.

Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita: "*Better one's own duty, though destitute of merits, than the well-executed duty of another. He who does the duty laid down by his own nature does not incur sin. Congenital duty, O son of Kant, though defective, ought not to be abandoned. All undertakings, indeed, are doded by defects as fire by smoke." (XVIII:47,48) Then again He says: "Abandoning all duties, come to Me alone for shelter: Sor not, I will liberate thee from all sins." (XVIII:66)*

In the previous two verses He asks Arjuna to abandon all duties. Is this contradiction? Is the Lord blowing hot and cold with the same breath? No. This is not contradiction. Arjuna says to the Lord: "*My heart is weighted down with the voice of faintness; my mind is confused as to duty. I ask Thee which may be better that tell me decisively. I am Thy disciple, - appliant to Thee; teach me." (11:7)*

Lord Krishna gives the reply in verse 66 of Chapter XVIII: "*Abandoning all duties take refuge in Me alone: I will liberate thee from all sins; grieve not.*" This passage means that Arjuna is to avoid the tangle of these duties and take refuge in the Supreme. In other words, whatever actions one has to perform, according to one's disposition and innate tendency, he may do, taking refuge in the Supreme. Krishna gives a command to Arjuna, an assurance and a consolation. This is the most important verse in the Bhagavad Gita. If one can live in the spirit of this verse alone, he can have highest bliss.

Morality and duty are relative terms. They are changing according to the state of life, stage of mental growth and evolution of the individual, time and circumstances, and the country in which one lives. To eat meat in Kashmir is perfectly moral for a Bengali brahmin In the eyes of a Madrasi brahmin this is highly immoral. To have four wives (polygamy) is perfectly moral for a Muslim or a Chinaman, but for a Hindu this is highly immoral. A gentleman or lady can have divorce very easily in the West. Marriage is a contract in the West, whereas in India it is a sacrament or holy act that is done before the sacred fire. Divorce is quite moral in the West, but it is highly immoral in the East. For an Arya Samajist widow-marriage is quite moral; for a Sanatanist it is highly immoral. Poliandry (one woman marrying several husbands, the opposite of polygamy) is quite moral in Tibet, but it is highly immoral in the eyes of people of other countries. It is perfectly moral for a Sikh to drink, but it is immoral for him to smoke, People of cold countries require meat and a little liquor to keep up heat and help digestion. A soldier needs meat to keep up his strength and martial spirit. A brahmin or a sannyasin wants vegetable food, milk and fruits to help his meditation and keep up his sattvic mental attitude. Ignorant people hate others when they see them doing something that they themselves are not doing. A Madrasi vegetarian brahmin hates a fish-eating Bengali brahmin. This is a sad mistake. This retards his spiritual progress. A Madrasi is horrified when he sees a Hindustani eating with both his hands from the same plate as his children.

Similarly the idea of duty also varies among people of different countries. An African Negro cannot perform a fire ceremony in his hot country in summer. A Kashmiri pundit cannot take morning bath in winter in his place. The duty of one class of people cannot be the duty of another class of people. The duty of a man of one stage of life cannot be the duty of a man of another stage. The duties of a brahmin, vaishya, kshatriya and sudra, the duties of a brahmachari, householder, forest-dweller and a sannyasin, are quite different. A Brahmin cannot do the duty of a soldier. To kill an enemy is the duty of a soldier or

kshatriya. To practise non-violence in thought, word and deed is the duty of a sannyasin and brahmin. Man evolves quickly by performing rigidly his duties allotted to his station in life.

Children of immortality! Shake off all weaknesses. Stand up and gird your loins. Do your duty satisfactorily in accordance with your caste or stage of life. Evolve quickly in spirituality. Eternal bliss, supreme peace, infinite knowledge and satisfaction can be had in God only. Practice of duty will surely lead to the attainment of God- consciousness. There is no happiness in finite objects. The Infinite alone is bliss. Understand the Truth through the practice of your duty. This world is unreal. It is like a mirage. The senses and mind deceive you at every moment. Wake up! Open your eyes and learn to discriminate. Do not trust your senses. They are your enemies. It is very difficult to get this human birth. Life is short, time is fleeting Those who cling to unreal things of this world are verily committing suicide. Struggle hard to practise your duty. Keep the ideal before your eyes always. Have a programme of life. Attempt to realise the ideal with leech-like tenacity and attain success. Practise and realise the state of sat-chid-ananda right now in this very second. May the blessings of the Lord be upon you all! May joy, bliss, immortality, peace and poise abide with you for ever!

Philosophy of Right and Wrong

Right and wrong, dharma and adharma, are both relative terms. It is very difficult to define these terms precisely. Even sages are bewildered sometimes in finding out what is right and what is wrong in some special circumstances. That is the reason why Lord Krishna says the Bhagavad Gita: "*What is action, what is inaction? Even the wise are herein perplexed. Therefore I shall teach thee such action by knowing which thou shall be liberated from evil. For, verily, the true nature of action should be known, as also of forbidden action, and of inaction; hard it is to understand the course of action. He who sees inaction in action, and action in inaction, he is wise among men. He is harmonious, even while performing all actions." (IV:16, 17, 18)*

I shall try to explain the terms 'right' and 'wrong'. Rishi Kanada, the author of Vaiseshika philosophy says in the opening sutra: "*That which brings supreme bliss and exaltation is dharma. That which elevates you and brings you nearer to God is right. That which takes you down and away from God 15 wrong. That which is done in strict accordance with the injunctions of the scriptures is right, and that which is done against the injunctions of the scriptures is wrong."* This is one way of defining these terms. To work in accordance with the Divine Will is right; to work in opposition to the Divine Will is wrong.

It is very difficult to find out by the man in the street what exactly the Divine Will is in certain actions. That is the reason why wise sages declare that people should resort to scriptures, learned pandits and karma yoga for several years and who has done worship of God for a realised persons for consultation. A pure man who has done nishkama long time can readily find out the Divine Will when he wants to do certain actions. He can hear the inner shrill, small voice. Ordinary people should not attempt to hear this Divine Voice, the voice of God - they may mistake the voice of the impure mind for the voice of God. The lower instinctive mind will delude them.

Some people say: "We can find out good and evil, right and wrong, by consulting our conscience only." No individual will be able to do this by consulting his conscience only. It may give help. Conscience is not an infallible guide. The conscience of a man changes according to his experiences and education.

Conscience is one's own intellectual conviction. The conscience of the individual speaks in accordance with his tendencies, habits, passions, inclinations, capacity and education. The conscience of a savage speaks a language entirely different from that of a civilised European. The conscience of an African negro speaks a language entirely different from that of an ethically developed yogi of India. Ask a clerk in the collectorate: "What are your duties?" He will say: "I must earn money to support my family and parents. I must not injure others. I must read Ramayana." He has no idea of the laws of Nature. He will submit himself blindly to the laws whatever they may be. If you ask: "What are your duties to the country and humanity? What is right and wrong? What is good and evil?" he will simply blink. Ask any taxi driver: "What is your duty?" He will say: "Anyhow, I must earn Rs. 20 daily. I have to purchase ten gallons of petrol, tyres, tubes and crude oil. The tyres are very costly. I have six daughters and five sons. I must protect them." If you ask him anything about God, virtues, liberation, bondage and freedom, right and wrong, he will be bewildered. Why is there so much divergence between the promptings of conscience of two persons of the same caste, religion or creed? Why do we find ten different convictions among ten persons of the same district and same community? The voice of conscience alone is not sufficient to guide man in understanding of the laws of God, right and wrong, good and evil and other duties of life. The scriptures and realised persons only can truly guide a man in the discharge of his duties in an efficient manner. That is the reason why Lord Krishna emphatically declares: "*He who, having cast aside the ordinances of the scriptures, follows the promptings of desire, attains not to perfection, nor happiness, nor the highest goal. Therefore let the scriptures be thy authority in determining what ought to be done, or what ought not to be done. Knowing what has been declared by the ordinances of the scriptures, thou ought to work in this world."(XVI:23,24)*

If you say: "Scriptures are countless. They are like the ocean. I can hardly understand the truths that are inculcated there. I cannot fathom out and gauge their depths. There are contradictions, I am puzzled and bewildered," then strictly follow the words of a guru in whom you can place absolute faith and confidence. If there is fear. Shame, doubt, pricking of the conscience and uneasiness of mind, know that you are doing wrong. If there is joy, exhilaration and satisfaction, understand that you are doing a right action.

That work which gives elevation, joy and peace to the mind is right, that which brings depression, pain and restlessness to the mind is wrong. This is an easy way to find out right and wrong. Selfishness douds understanding. Therefore if a man has even a tinge of selfishness he cannot detect what is right and wrong. A very pure, subtle, sharp intellect is needed for this purpose. The Bhagavad Gita describes the nature of sattvic, rajasic and tamasic natures in chapter eighteen as follows:

"*That which knows the path of work and renunciation, what ought to be done, fear and fearlessness, bondage and liberation that intellect is sattvic (pure), 0 Arjuna. That by which one wrongly understands dharma and adharma and also what ought to be done and what ought not to be done that intellect, O Arjuna, - is rajasic. That which, enveloped in darkness, sees dharma as adharma and all things perverted that intellect is tamasic." (XVIII:30,31,32)*

Various other definitions are given by wise men to help the students in the path of righteousness. In the Bible it is said: "Do unto others as you would be done by." This is a very good maxim. The whole gist of right conduct is found here. If one practises this very carefully he will not commit any wrong act. Non-injury (ahimsa) is the highest virtue. If one is well established in ahimsa in thought, word and deed, he can never do any wrong action. That is the reason why Patanjali Maharishi has given ahimsa great prominence in his raja yoga philosophy. Ahimsa comes first in the practice of yama or self-restraint. To give pleasure

to others is right; to spread misery and pain to others is wrong. One can follow this in his daily conduct towards others and can evolve in the spiritual path.

Do not perform any act that brings shame and fear. You will be quite safe if you follow this rule. Stick to any rule that appeals to your reason and conscience and follow it with faith and attention. You will evolve and reach the abode of eternal bliss.

The beginning of ethics is to reflect upon ourselves, our surroundings and our actions. Before we act we must stop to think. When a man earnestly attends to what he recognises as his duties, he will progress and in consequence thereof his comfort and prosperity will increase. His pleasures will be more refined, his happiness, his enjoyments and his recreations will be better and nobler. Happiness is like a shadow; if pursued it will flee from us, but if a man does not trouble himself about it and strictly attends to his duties, pleasures of the best and noblest kind will crop up everywhere in his path. If he does not anxiously pursue it, happiness will follow him.

The Three Gunas (Attributes of Nature)

A clear understanding of the three gunas and their operations is very necessary for a karma yogi. He who has knowledge of these can do his work in a better and more efficient manner.

Nature is composed of the three gunas or forces; namely, sattva, rajas and tamas. Sattva is harmony, light, wisdom, equilibrium goodness. Rajas is passion, motion or activity. Tamas is inertia, inaction or darkness. These three qualities bring bondage to the jiva (individual soul). Though sattva is a desirable quality, yet it also binds a man. It is a golden fetter. Rajas is the source of attachment and thirs for life. It causes attachment to action. Tamas binds man to heedlessness, laziness and sleep. Or

These three qualities are inseparable. No one is absolutely rajasic or sattvic or tamasic. Sometimes sattva prevails in man. He is calm and serene. He sits quietly and entertains sublime, soul-elevating thoughts. He studies religious scriptures. He talks on divine topics. When sattva prevails the other two qualities are overpowered for the time being. At other times rajas prevails. He does some action. He moves about. He plans, schemes, speculates. He craves for power, wealth and activity. When rajas prevails, sattva and tamas are overpowered for the time being. Sometimes tamas prevails and the man becomes slothful. He feels lazy, indolent and lethargic. He is dull and feels sleepy. When tamas prevails, sattva and rajas are overpowered for the time being.

In some people sattva is predominant; in others rajas is predominant; and in some others tamas is predominant. When one is peaceful and wise, then it may be known that sattva is increasing. Greed, outgoing energy, undertaking of action, restlessness and desire – these are born of the increase of rajas. Darkness, delusion, stagnation, dullness, heedlessness inertia. These are born of the increase of

If sattva is predominant at the time of one's death, then he goes to the spotless world of sages. If rajas is predominant at the time of one's death, he will doubtless be born among those that are attached to action. If one dies when tamas is predominant, he will be born in the womb of the senseless.

Those who are established in sattva rise upwards. The rajasic people occupy a middle place and the tamasic people go downwards, shrouded in the vilest of qualities. 95

Intense rajas can take a sattvic turn. A man who is immersed in deep rajas can take to the path of renunciation. He will, as is the law, be fed-up with activities. In the Bhagavad Gita you will find: *"For a sage who is seeking yoga, action is called the means; for the same sage when enthroned in yoga, serenity is called the means." (VI:3).*

It is impossible to rise or jump to sattva all of a sudden from tamas. One should convert tamas into full rajas first, then one can reach sattva. Sattva is intense activity. Just as the wheel of an engine appears to remain stationary when it moves very swiftly, so also a sattvic man appears to be calm through his self-restraint or control. A sattvic man is most active. He can turn out tremendous work within the twinkling of an eye. He has full concentration.

Do not mistake rajasic restlessness or movements for karma yoga or divine activity. People may say that they are doing selfless service to the world, but if you analyse their motives there will be the taint of personal desire in some form or other. Many persons cannot sit quiet even for a moment. They think that moving about here and there or doing some action or other is to be full of life. The yogi or sage who sits still by calming the mind, who does nothing at all physically, is the most active man in the whole world; whereas the man who runs here and there and who is always very busy does nothing at all. This may be paradoxical to you. Very few can comprehend the truth of this statement. Sattva is intense activity. A wheel that revolves very rapidly appears to be at rest. So is sattva. So is a sattvic man.

Tamas is that binding force with a tendency to lethargy, sloth and foolish actions. It causes delusion or non-discrimination. It binds him who associates the Self with the body. A tamasic man acts under the compulsion of the wants of the body. He has no power of judgment. Troubled by the wants of the body he acts under pressure to keep himself alive. His actions are not guided by reason. They are on the plane of instinct. His senses are dull. He becomes infatuated and stupefied. He has no inclination to work. He yawns much. He sleeps too much. He always wants to sleep. He never knows when and how to act, what, to whom and how to talk. He does not know how to behave or how to address others. He takes delight in following the wrong path. He is thoughtless and ignorant. He forgets everything. He is negligent and indolent.

The fruit of good action, they say, is sattvic and pure; verily the fruit of rajas is pain, and ignorance is the fruit of tarnas. The fruit of good action is both happiness and knowledge. The fruit of rajasi actions is bitter. Rajasic action brings pain, disappointment and dissatisfaction. Rajasic activity leads to greed. When the rajasic man tries to gratify his original desires, new desires crop up. This opens the door to greed. In tamasic action there is no knowledge within and no foresight, therefore there is unrighteousness.

The Atman or Brahman is beyond the three gunas. One should increase his sattva guna by development of virtuous qualities, by taking sattvic food, doing charity, practising austerities, doing japa and meditation, controlling the senses, and studying religious books. Then he should go beyond sattva guna also by identifying himself with the Atman or witness, and practising deep meditation.

When the dweller in the body has crossed these three qualities from which all bodies have been produced, then, liberated from birth, death, old age, diseases and sorrow, he drinks the nectar of immortality.

He who has crossed the three qualities has the following signs as described in the Bhagavad Gita: "*He who does not hate radiance nor activity nor even delusion, when present, nor longs for them when absent; he who, seated like one unconcerned is unshaken by the qualities; and he who, knowing that the qualities are*

active, is centred in the self and moves not. Balanced in pleasure and pain, self- reliant, to whom a lump of earth, a rock and gold are alike; the same to loved and unloved, firm, the same in censure and praise, the same in honour and ignominy the same to friend and foe, abandoning all undertakings – he is said to have crossed over the qualities. And he who serves Me with unswerving devotion, he, crossing beyond qualities, is fit for becoming Brahman." (XIV:22-26).

Karma Indriyas (Organs of Action)

A karma yogi should have a detailed knowledge of the nature and workings of the karma indriyas (the organs of action) hands and the organs of speech, generation and excretion are the five organs of action. The real indriyas are in the astral body. They are very the feet, the subtle. They have corresponding centres or counterparts in the brain (nerve centres). They are moved by prana. Without the prana they cannot move even a fraction of an inch. The karma indriyas are located in the vital sheath of the astral body. What you see outside – mouth, hands, feet, organ of reproduction and anus are mere external instruments.

The karma indriyas are the five soldiers. The commander-in-chief is the mind. The mind extracts work from these soldiers when it desires to get sensual objects for its gratification. Mind also works in unison with these five organs. Mind is the leader or big dacoit. These five organs are his assistants. They execute the commands of their leader immediately. They cannot work independently without the healthy and willing co-operation of the mind. It is the mind that really works through these organs. It is the mind that really plans, schemes and suggests in all activities. During sleep these indriyas temporarily get involution in the mind. During samadhi or the superconscious state they are absorbed in the mind.

The individual soul is a constant companion of the mind. It is he who reaps the fruits of actions, pleasure or pain.

You will find in the Bhagavad Gita: "*These five causes, O mighty- armed, learn of Me as declared in the sankhya system, for the accomplishment of all actions. The body, the actor, the various organs, the diverse kinds of energies and the presiding deities, also, the fifth-whatever action a man performs by his body, mind and speech, whether right or the reverse, these five are the cause thereof." (XVIII:13,14,15)*

"*That being so, he verily who owing to untrained reason looked on his Self, which is isolated, as the actor, he of perverted intelligence sees not." (XVIII:16).*

You will find again in the Bhagavad Gita: "Knowledge, the knowable and the knower form the threefold impulse to action; the organ, the action and the actor form the threefold constituents of action." (XVIII:18)

At first the individual soul has knowledge of the objects. Then a desire arises in the mind to possess the objects for his enjoyment. Then he exerts to obtain these objects. Desire is the motivating force that moves the mind to action. Man thinks of the object of the senses. Then he develops attachment to them. From attachment there springs desire. Thought is the fuel, desire is the fire. If you can stop the thoughts, the fire of desire will be extinguished by itself, just as a lamp is extinguished when the supply of ghee or oil is withdrawn. There is at first attraction for objects. Then comes attachment.

There is at first attraction for objects. Then comes attachment. Even if the attraction dies, the longing or hankering for the object will continue to remain. This is the thread of hankering. Then there is the preference for objects. This is still more difficult to be eradicated. The organs of action must be controlled. The thoughts should also be controlled. The mind should be firmly fixed on the Lord. Only then will you become a true yogi. Only then will you attain to Self- realisation. Destroy attachment first. Then the longing and preference will slowly die.

There are three kinds of impulses the impulse of thinking, the impulse of speech and the impulse of action. A karma yogi should not be impulsive. He must not be carried away by emotions. He must calm the surging, bubbling emotions and the impulses, and purify them Then he can turn out real solid work. He must destroy all unnecessary useless or vain thoughts. This will add to his reserve energy, this will conserve his energy. Energy is wasted in useless thinking.

Energy is also wasted in idle talking and worldly gossiping. A karma yogi should observe silence (mauna) for two hours daily and for six hours on Sundays and holidays. Mauna will destroy impulses of speech. He who observes mauna can use measured words during speaking. He can control anger and falsehood. He will be peaceful, he will have a strong will. There are people who talk like a machine at a tremendous speed, without a full-stop. The greatest punishment for such people is to put them in silence for three days. They will be in a great fix. He who talks much thinks little and does little. He is a very restless man. The organ of speech brings great distraction of mind. Control of speech really means the control of the mind. There is a sharp sword in the tongue. One harsh word or a mild rebuke breaks a long-standing friendship and results in fighting and actual bloodshed. The restlessness of the world is due to too much talking, gossiping, back-biting and scandal-mongering. Ladies are more talkative. They disturb the peaceful atmosphere of their homes. If all people of the world practise mauna for two hours daily this will undoubtedly contribute to the of the world to a considerable degree.

Self-Delusion

Mere physical control of the organs of action will not do. You must not think of the objects of the senses. If as you observe fasting during Ekadasi days to propitiate Lord Hari your mind constantly thinks of various kinds of delicious food, you will not get the benefits of fasting. You will be regarded as a self-deluded man or hypocrite. That is the reason why Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita:

"*He who sits controlling the organs of actions, but dwelling in his mind on the objects of the senses, that bewildered man is called a hypocrite." (III:6).*

The actions of the mind are the real actions. Thought is the real action. You must utilise the energy that is conserved by the control of organs for higher purposes at the altar of God. This will constitute 99 yoga. That passionate man who visits his legal wife frequently is more immoral than the man who occasionally goes to the house of ill-fame. That man who constantly dwells on sexual thoughts is highly immoral though he observes physical brahmacharya by controlling the body. He is the worst man. It is thought that sways the body. Lord Krishna says to Arjuna: “But he who, controlling the senses (of knowledge) by the mind, 0 Arjuna, with the organs of action, without attachment, performs yoga

By action, he is worthy." (III:7) Then the Lord praises action and further adds that one cannot keep up even his health if he remains inactive. So he says: "Perform then, right action, for action is superior to inaction, and even the very maintenance of the body would not be possible by inaction." (III:8).

It is also wrong to think that actions lead to bondage, and that they should not, therefore, be performed. Karma yoga is performance of action with understanding or poised reason that is not affected by loss or gain, success or failure. Lord Krishna gives valuable direction to Arjuna in the performance of action. He says: "*Unattached thou perform action*" (III:9). This is the secret of karma yoga.

The Pseudo Karma Yogi

A man may put on homespun clothes and don a homespun cap, but may not have any of the qualifications or attributes of the man who has introduced homespun cloth and may not even follow his instructions. He may not have the least tinge of self-sacrifice. He may do a little charity and feed some poor people just for the sake of name and fame, and even himself write to the papers about his charitable act in the name of a correspondent. He may donate a small sum to a public cause and eagerly watch in the newspapers to see whether his name is published or not. He will be restless till he sees his name in the papers. Such a man is called a pseudo-karma yogi. The world abounds now in such sort of karma yogis.

A landlord or money-lender sucks the blood of poor peasants and builds a palace. He gives a donation of several thousands of pounds a to a Hindu university out of his reserve fund of a hundred thousand. He builds a temple for a few thousands and puts his name on the marble slab in front of the temple in bold letters. This is not karma yoga. This is pompous advertisement for acquiring name and fame.

On the other hand an ordinary labourer who earns a few shillings by the sweat of his brow may offer his money in charity by feeding a few starving or sick people, and may himself starve on that day. This is real self-sacrifice. This is real karma yoga.

In olden days, Madura in South India was ruled by Pandian kings. One of the Pandian kings spent two lacs of rupees in doing utsava of Lord Soma Sundareshwar in a certain year. He had a great deal of ego. He thought within himself: "I am a great devotee of Lord Siva. I have spent a large sum of money in the worship of the Lord. Thousands of brahmins, sadhus and the poor have been fed. I have given rich presents to brahmin pandits. There is no king who is so pious as myself." Lord Siva appeared in his dream that night and said: "0 king! Do not be proud of your piety, devotion and charity. I am not pleased with you in any way. Wherever there is pride, there cannot be any real devotion and holiness. Just go and see my humble devotee, the wood-cutter, who lives in a small hut on the banks of the Vaighai, and who offers to Me a little kheer made of broken rice and a little black sugar on Mondays. Learn from him what real devotion is." The king was greatly vexed. The next morning he proceeded to see the wood- cutter in his hut. He asked the wood-cutter: "How do you worship Lord Siva?" The man replied in a meek voice: "O king! I earn two annas a day. I spend one anna for my food, distribute nine pice in charity and save three pice daily. Every Monday I prepare a little kheer with some broken rice and black sugar and offer it to Lord Siva. Whenever I cut wood, I always repeat 'Siva, Siva, Siva'. I always remember Him. This is my devotion to the Lord. I do not know anything else."

The king was very much pleased with the humility, simplicity, loving nature, devotion and purity of the wood-cutter. He erected a small building for him and made arrangements for his food till the end of his life. He learnt many practical lessons from the woodcutter's life and in turn became a real, humble devotee of Lord Siva. He destroyed his pride, vanity and egoism.

Lord Jesus says: "Your left hand should not know what the right hand does. Be meek when you serve. Die unknown. Let nobody know your name. But work and serve others. Do not expect approbation and applause. Then only real fragrance of your soul will come out." Dear friends who tread the path of karma yoga! Be sincere al heart. Do not run after the shadowy toys of name and fame. Name and fame are illusory. They are mere vibrations in the air. Nobody can earn name in this world. Does anybody remember Sri Vyaşa, an everlasting Vasishtha, Vikramaditya, Yajnavalkya, Vama Dev and Jada Bharat now? Many great souls have come and gone. At the present time the names of one or two political leaders are remembered. After a few years their names also will disappear. Treat name and fame as offal, poison or vomited matter. This world is unreal. Care not for little perishable things. Care for the everlasting Reality only. Do constant selfless service silently with thoughts of God and realise the indwelling presence. Become a true karma yogi.

UNIVERSAL LAWS

There is no such thing as miracle. Everything that happens is the result of eternal, immutable laws. A knowledge of these universal laws of Nature will help one to clearly understand that there is perfect order in the universe in everything. Even a rank materialist will be induced to realise the glory of the Lord, the Lawgiver, who is hidden in these names and forms.

Every man should have a comprehensive understanding of these laws and their operations, then he can live in this world smoothly and happily. He can utilise the helping forces to serve his ends in the best possible manner; he can neutralise the hostile forces to serve his ends in the best possible manner; he can neutralise the antagonistic currents. Just as the fish swims against the current, so also he will be able to go against the hostile currents by adjusting himself properly and safeguarding himself through suitable precautionary methods. Otherwise he becomes a slave, he is tossed about hither and thither helplessly by various currents. Various hostile forces drag him in different corners. He drifts like a wooden plank in a river. He is always very miserable and unhappy even if he is wealthy and possesses everything that the world can offer.

Who has The captain of a steamer who has a mariner's knowledge of the sea, the routes and the oceanic currents, can sail compass, smoothly. Otherwise his steamer will drift here and there helplessly and be wrecked by being dashed against some icebergs or rocks. Likewise, a wise sailor in the ocean of this life, who has a detailed knowledge of the laws of Nature, can sail smoothly and reach the goal of life.

Remember that God is neither partial nor unjust. You suffer on account of your own wicked actions. Every endeavour to attain wealth or power by crookedness, cunningness and underhand dealings will eventually react upon your own peace and prosperity. The law of retribution is absolute. Actions and reactions are equal and opposite. Understand the law and live honestly and truthfully.

Sow the seeds which will bring pleasant fruits and which will make you happy herein and hereafter. Do not sow the seeds which will bring unpleasant fruits and which will make you miserable and unhappy in this life or hereafter. Be cautious in doing your daily duties. Watch every thought, word and action. Go to the root and purify the thoughts first.

Prayer, japa, meditation, study of philosophical books, pure food, enquiry and satsang will purify your mind and eradicate ignoble and wicked thoughts. Observe the vow of silence: you will then be able to control your speech. Practise yama and niyama. Develop sattvic qualities. Slowly eradicate negative qualities. By these practices you will not be able to do any wrong action. The force of sattvic habits will goad you on to do virtuous actions only.

Law of Cause and Effect

All the phenomena of nature are governed by one important law, the universal law of causation. The law of causation is a universal law that keeps up the inner harmony and the logical order of the universe. This law works out as an endless chain. Man's deeds are as much subject to this law as the events and occurences in this physical plane.

All the physical and mental forces in nature obey this grand law of cause and effect. The law and Law-giver are one. The law and God are one. Nature and her laws are one. The laws of gravitation, cohesion, adhesion, attraction and repulsion, the law of like and dislike on the physical plane, the law of relativity, the law of association on the mental plane, all operate in strict accordance with this law of cause and effect. From the vibration of an electron to the revolution of a mighty planet, from the falling of a mango to the ground to the powerful willing of a yogi, from the motion of a runner in athletics to the movement of radio- waves in the subtle ether, from the transmitting of a telegraphic message to the telepathic communication of a yogi in the thought-world – every event is the effect of some invisible force that works in happy concord and harmony with the law of cause and effect.

The unfoldment of life is made up of succession of events. Events are made up of their causes and effects. All other laws of nature are -like the subordinate to this fundamental law. The sun shines, the fire burns, the river flows, the wind blows, the tree blossoms and bears fruit, the mind thinks, feels and wills, the brain and the various organs heart, lungs, spleen and kidneys work in harmony and in strict obedience to this grand law of cause and effect. This grand law operates everywhere on the physical and mental planes. No phenomenon can escape from the operation of this mighty law.

The seed has its cause in the tree and itself becomes in turn the cause of a tree. The grownup father procreates a son, and the son in turn becomes a father. The cause is found in the effect and the effect is found in the cause. This is the universal chain of cause and effect which has no end. No link in the chain is unnecessary. This world runs on this fundamental, vital law. This law is inexorable and immutable.

Scientists are carefully observing the phenomena of nature and are trying to find out the exact causes of all that takes place in nature. The astronomer sits in his observatory with his long, powerful telescope and watches the heavenly map, and studies the stars and planets very carefully. He tries to find out the exact causes that bring about the phenomena. The reflective philosopher sits in a contemplative mood and tries to find out the cause of this world, the cause of the pains and miseries of this worldly existence and the cause of the phenomena of this birth and death.

No event can occur without having a positive definite cause at the back of it. The breaking out of war, the rise of a comet, the occurrence of an earthquake or a volcanic eruption, thunder, lightning, floods, diseases of the body, fortune, misfortune- all have definite causes behind them. There is no such thing as a chance or accident. The cause is hidden or unknown if you are not able to trace out the cause for the particular accident.

This law of cause and effect is quite mysterious. That is the reason why Lord Krishna says: “Mysterious is the path of action”. If your finite mind is not able to find out the cause in an accident, it does not mean that there is no cause behind such occurences.

Understanding the laws of nature you can mould or shape your character in any way you like. “As a man thinks, so he becomes,” is one of the great laws of nature. Think you are pure, pure you will become. Think you are noble, noble you will become. Think you are a man, man you will become. Think you are Brahman, Brahman you will become.

Become an embodiment of good nature. Do good actions always. Serve, love, give. Make others happy. Live to serve others. Then you will reap happiness. You will get favourable circumstances or opportunities and environments. If you hurt others, if you do scandal- mongering, mischief-mongering, back-biting and

tale-bearing, if you exploit others, if you acquire the property of others by foul means, if you do any actions that can give pain to others, you will reap pain. You will get unfavourable circumstances, conditions and environments.

Just as you can build your good or bad character by sublime or base thinking, so also you can shape your favourable or unfavourable circumstances by doing good or bad actions. A man of discrimination is always careful, vigilant and circumspect. He always watches his thoughts carefully. He introspects. He knows exactly what is going on in his mental factory, what thought or mood is prevailing at a particular time. He never allows any evil thought to enter the gates of his mental factory. He at once nips them in the bud. When the mind raises its hood of an evil thought, he takes the rod

Of discrimination and strikes at the hood. Just as the soldier kills his enemies one by one with his sword when they enter the fort, so also the man of discrimination kills the evil thought with his sword of discrimination when it tries to enter the fort of the mind. Thus he builds a noble character. He is careful in his speech. He speaks little, he speaks sweet, loving words. He never utters any unkind or harsh words that can effect the feelings of others. He practises the vow of silence. He develops patience, mercy and universal love. He speaks the truth. Thus he puts a check on the organ of speech and the impulses of speech. He uses measured words and he writes measured lines. This produces a deep and profound impression on the minds of the people. He practises non-violence and chastity in thought, word and deed. He practises deanliness and straightforwardness. He tries to keep balance of mind and to be always happy and cheerful. He tries the three kinds of austerity physical, verbal and mental and controls his actions. He cannot do any action that is evil.

He who spreads happiness will always get such favourable circum- sances as can bring him happiness. He who spreads pain to others will doubtless get such unfavourable circumstances, according to the law of nature, as can bring him misery and pain. Therefore man creates his own character and circumstances. Bad character can be transmuted into good character by means of good thoughts, and unfavourable circumstances can be changed into favourable circumstances by doing good actions. O Ram! You must understand the laws of Nature and become wise and happy.

He who has rightly understood this law can never do any harm to anybody. He will become an embodiment of goodness. If you do a wrong action against an individual, it disturbs the whole atmosphere. I you entertain an evil thought it pollutes the whole thought-world. That is the reason why occultists say: “Cultivate good thoughts. Eradicate evil thoughts.” Every thought has a cause behind it. Every action, every thought, however trivial and insignificant it may be, affects the whole world directly or indirectly. That noble soul who always does good to the world and entertains sublime thoughts, is a blessing to the world at large. He purifies the whole world.

Suppose for a moment you write some sensational article in some newspaper. It arouses the emotions and sentiments of the readers. They begin to do something against the Government. A serious riot now ensues. Police forces are brought in. Many people are shot. Many new rules are framed to check and repress the riots. The parents of those who were killed suffer. This riot produces an effect on the minds of the people of other parts of the world also. In fact the whole world is affected by a single event. A single sensational article has wrought such disastrous results. One event may be both a cause and effect at the same time. The endless chain of cause and effect is kept up all throughout. You cannot say that this link is useless or unnecessary.

This world is a relative plane. It contains good, evil, and a mixture of good and evil. This is the reason why Lord Krishna the Gita: “Good, evil and mixed- non-relinquisher.” (XVIII:12) says in threefold is the fruit of action hereafter for the

There can be neither absolute good nor absolute evil in this world. That which gives you comfort and pleasure, that which is beneficial to you, to the world and your neighbour, is good. That which gives you discomfort, uneasiness, pain and misery, that which is not beneficial to the world and to your neighbour, is evil. That which gives misery and pain to some, and pleasure to others, is a mixture of good and evil.

You have now a comprehensive understanding of this grand law of cause and effect. You can change your thoughts and habits and mould a new character. You can become a righteous man and a saint by doing virtuous actions and entertaining noble and divine thoughts. When you attain knowledge of Self, when you annihilate this little mind, you can rest in your own essential nature. You can become identical with the Law-giver and then the law of cause and effect will not operate on you. You can conquer nature. May that invisible Law-giver, Brahman, guide you in the attainment of final beatitude of life!

Law of Karma

Orthodox Christians and theologians believe that God settles and fixes the destiny of a man before his birth. This is not logical and tenable. The hypothesis falls to the ground on account of its unsound nature. Man would then become like a piece of straw that is tossed about hither and thither in the wind. He would have no independence and freedom. This would make God partial, unjust and whimsical. The moral responsibility and liberty of a man would be destroyed. The man would become like a prisoner whose hands and legs are tied with chains. Why should God make one happy and another unhappy? Is He so whimsical and eccentric? Why should one get His Grace before he is born? Is He so biased? If God is all-merciful why can He not make all equally noble, virtuous, happy, good, moral and spiritual? Why is one born blind? Why should a sinner be responsible for his actions? Is he preordained to sin? Why should he suffer owing to the whim of such a Creator? Questions like these remain a puzzle if you accept the theory of ‘pre-ordination and grace.

The law of Karma or action and reaction has been the basis on which the Hindus have built up their culture and theory of rebirth. It is the proper explanation for the inequalities of the world, pleasure and pain, health and disease, wealth and poverty, and all other dualities. The doctrine of Karma alone will give satisfaction. It is sound, it appeals to reason. It throws a flood of clear light. Everyone reaps the fruits of his own actions. Man can do and undo his destiny by his own thoughts and character. He is a free agent. He may be a bad man in this birth, but he can change his thoughts, habits, tendencies and character and can become a good man or a saint in the next birth. He has free will. He can choose between two alternatives at every step. He is the architect of his own life. He is himself the victim of bad luck and ill-fortune. If a man acts wrongly and immorally, he is doing something unnatural and against his own best interests.

Do not laugh at the defects, infirmities and miseries of others. You too will be placed in the same position after some time. Mysterious. This body is the resultant product of Karma,

Fate is only the sum-total of the results of one’s past actions. Fate the result of the exercise of one’s freewill in the past.

The effects of actions will begin only when their roots exist. The roots are egoism, likes, dislikes, etc. If these roots are knowledge, discrimination and enquiry, how can they produce fruit Impossible. One takes this physical body to reap the fruits of his karma. This body is a field, and man a farmer. The seeds he sows are virtue and vice. The harvest is according to the seed he has sown. All will have to fulfil the law of sowing and reaping. Sow a good thought, a good deed, you will reap a good harvest of peace and prosperity.

Your births and environments are determined according to the destroyed by nature of your desires. Prarabdha places you in such suitable environments as are favourable for the gratification of your desires. A man is dragged to places where he can get his objects of desire. A man may be born in India as a poor brahmin in one birth. If he desires to become a multimillionaire, he may get his next birth in the United States of America. Suppose there is a poor intelligent boy in India. He has an intense desire to go to England for his I.C.S. examination. His desire to go in this birth cannot be fulfilled. Suppose also that there is a rich lady in England who has no son and has intense desire to get an intelligent one. The poor boy may get his next birth in London as the son of the rich lady. He will thus have his old strong desire gratified now. God gives suitable surroundings according to the nature of the desire of the man for his growth and evolution. The desire drags him to such places where the desired objects can be obtained. This is the law of Nature. Entertain holy desires. You will be placed in holy surroundings such as Uttarkashi, Himalayas and Benares, where you can perform austerities, sadhana (spiritual practices) and meditation amidst holy persons, and can have Self-realisation. If you entertain unholy desires you will be placed in places like Paris and Hollywood where you can have cinemas, restaurants, ball-rooms, etc. It is left you to select the desires, either holy or unholy. If you want to shine in divine glory and move as a man-god, select the holy desire. If you want to move as a man-beast in the slums of Paris, select the unholy desire

The law of Karma is subtle and unfathomable. It is mysterious and at times it totally baffles man. Nobody knows the future. Though it is mentioned in Garuda Purana that certain evil actions produce certain diseases (such as theft of a golden necklace brings on scrofula and so on), it is extremely difficult to say positively that this particular bad action is the cause for this particular terrible disease. If a man suffers from leprosy or consumption it may be the result of one single terrible evil action or a mixture of several bad karmas. Diseases are karmic purgations. They are guests of this house, this physical body. They are sweet messengers from Mother Kali.

It is difficult to say whether the fruit you enjoy at a particular time is the result of one action only or a combination of 2 or 3 virtuous actions; and the fruit of one virtuous action may have to be enjoyed not only in one birth but in different births. An extremely virtuous or vicious action brings its fruit immediately in this very birth.

A close study of this law gives encouragement to the man who has lost hope, and to the desperate and ailing. Destiny is created by man’s thoughts, habits and character. There is every chance of his correction and improvement by changing his thoughts and his habits. The Scoundrel can become a saint, the prostitute can become a chaste lady, a beggar can become a king. This mighty law provides for all this. The law of Karma only, can explain beautifully the inequalities of this world such as why one man is rich while another is poor, why one is wicked while another is a saint, one is very dull while another is a genius or a versatile prodigy, one is born decrepit while another is strong and healthy, etc.

How can you explain these inequalities? It is all karma. God can never be unjust or partial. He never sends punishments. He never chooses one man for suffering and another for blessing. He is the Author of laws

made for all men's blessing. The law is Himself and He is the law. The breaking of the laws brings pain and suffering. Never blame God. Become wise. Transgress not the law through your arrogance and egoism.

As a man is bound, be it by a gold or iron chain, so he is bound by his action, be it good or evil. Man gets good health, wealth, name, fame and prosperity on account of good karmas done in his previous births. Sufferings are due to bad karmas done in previous births. If you develop a carbuncle or get a fracture of the leg or arm, this is obviously due to some bad karma in your previous birth. The bad karma was the Cause and the carbuncle or fracture is the effect. If you get some fortune in this birth, the cause is some good action that you must have done in your previous birth.

The fruits of karma are hidden. When you do an evil action, you do not feel anything. You think it is nothing. Every action that you d produces a two-fold effect. It produces an impression in your mind and when you die you carry the impression in the karmashaya (receptacle works in your subconscious mind). It produces an impression on the world or akashic records also. Any action is bound to react upon you with equal force and effect. If you hurt another man you really hun yourself. This wrong action is bound to react upon and injure you, h will bring misery and pain.

When you suffer, when you are in acute agony, when you are amidst a serious catastrophe or dire calamity, you repeat: "O Lord, have done a heinous crime in my last birth. I am reaping the fruit of t now." You are actually seeing the fruits of a bad karma which were invisible till now. Always do good actions. Watch daily and find out every day how many good actions you have done. If you do some good to another man you are really helping yourself. You are really doing good to yourself because there is nothing but the Self. This virtuous action will react upon you with equal force and effect. It will bring you joy and happiness. That is the reason why sages and rishis, prophet and moralists harp on the one note: "*Love thy neighbour as thyself. Never hurt the feelings of others. Non-injury is the highest virtue. Do good to all. Do as you would be done by."*

Only the doctrine of Karma can explain the mysterious problem of good and evil in this world. Only the doctrine of Karma can bring solace, contentment and strength to the afflicted and the desperate. It solves our difficulties and problems of life. It gives encouragement to the hopeless and the forlorn. It pushes a man to right thinking, right speech and right action. It brings a brilliant future for that man who lives according to this universal law. If all people understand this law correctly and discharge their daily duties carefully they will rise to sublime heights in the ladder of spirituality. They will be moral and virtuous and have a happy, peaceful and contented life. They can bear the burden of worldly life with patience, endurance and strength of mind. There will not be any room for complaint when they see inequalities in birth, fortune, intelligence and capacities. There will be heaven on earth. All will rejoice even in suffering. Greed, jealousy. Hatred, anger and passion will vanish. Virtue will reign suprem everywhere. We will have a glorious age now with peace and plenty everywhere. Blessed is the man who understands and lives in the law, for he will soon attain God-consciousness and Law-giver: Then the law become one with the will no longer operate on him.

The main idea of Karma, then, is not one of punishment for past failure, mistakes, wrongs and crimes, but that you may learn your Jesson and gain as quickly as possible the soul-qualities needed, that you may fulfil your destiny, your special place and work in the Grand Plan. Do all services unselfishly without egoism and offer them at His feet with devotion. This is devotion to the Lord. Samadhi will supervene of its own accord.

Dr. M.H. Syed, M.A. Ph.D., D. Lit. Writes in the Hindu Mind:

There is nothing which has wrought so much havoc in the practical life of the Hindus as the misconception of the law of Karma – the eternal law of cause and effect – that works with unerring precision in all the departments of human life. It is said that it is a gloomy doctrine and that it tends to paralyse human effort, and closes the spring of all right action. In popular language this doctrine means predestination, pure and simple. It is believed that a man is a creature of his past actions and that all his present life with its activities, joys, sorrows, pain and pleasure, success and failure, gain and loss, are predetermined by his past doings over which he has no control, and therefore he should be utterly resigned and waste no time in improving his or his neighbour's lot.

There is only an element of truth in this attitude. In other words, it is only half a truth that is understood and followed. Unless the whole truth is grasped with regard to this doctrine, it will always prove a source of confusion and cause a great deal of harm. If Indian people are to rise from their present state of degradation and shake off the fetters of their thraldom, it is time that they clearly tried to understand the true meaning and philosophy of actions and the reign of the law of Karma, by which the whole human race has to evolve.

It is true that a man's present abilities are the direct outcome of his own thoughts and actions in the past: his cogitable endowments, his physical heredity, his moral and mental instincts and capacities are the results of his own thoughts and feelings of his previous births. A farmer reaps rich harvests only when he labours in his field for a long time. Unless he cares to till the ground, sow the seed, water and manure it, he would not be in a position t the fruit of his toil. What he sows today he will reap tomorrow. This is an immutable law and holds good in everything without exception. To say that one's capacity for fresh effort and new lines of action is paralysed or doomed by one's past doings is as futile and groundless as to say that because one sowed yesterday, cannot sow fresh seeds in new grounds today. The fact of the one matter is that free-will is never choked and stifled by any past action. The only thing is that a man cannot achieve what he wants all at once and without delay. The good law pays every person according to his need and in due time. The law runs its own course. The results of past actions, thoughts and feelings appear to us as effects of causes we set up from our own free choice. Similarly, we are equally free and unfettered to choose a line of action which is sure to bring its fruit in due time. A man is bound by the past debts he incurred or contracts he made. As soon as he pays up his liabilities he is once more free to choose whether he should incur fresh debt or not. Over the inevitable he has no control and if the law is to be justified, he should have no reason to complain against it. It is always open to him to mould the karma which is in the course of making, in any way he likes. Under the security of the changeless law of cause and effect a man can serenely proceed to achieve anything he desires to accomplish. Sooner or later he is sure to succeed in his well-directed efforts. In nature nothing is lost. Again, as Bacon said: "Nature is conquered by obedience." (By nature he meant natural laws.)

If once we understand the law that guides our life and action we shall be able to act in such a manner as to make this law our ally and help-mate rather than our adversary. So long as the conditions laid down by the law are meticulously fulfilled and observed, we have fullest certainty of our success in any direction.

The three aspects of the law of Karma should be grasped clearly The first is the sanchita karma, the sum total and storehouse of all our actions, good or bad, in the innumerable past lives that we have left behind or from the time we began to discriminate right from wrong and thus started acting on our own responsibility and with our own initiative. The whole of it is recorded and preserved how could it be

otherwise when we live under the reign of an immutable law? The second is prarabdha - the inevitable karma and experienced in previous lives. This is also called ripe karma, because it is a debt which is overdue and it is time that it should be paid in the form of sorrow and suffering, gain and loss to the uttermost farthing, whether we like it or not. The third form is that of kriyamana (or agami), that karma which is in the course of making. It is this which preserves our free-will, with certain limitations, and ensures our future success. Because man is made in God's image and shares divine life, he is free to act in any way he likes. By virtue of the same principle, whatever he intensely

Desires he is sure to accomplish in the course of time. "Perform thou right action, for action is superior to inaction and in inaction even the maintenance of thy body would be impossible."" So says the blessed Lord Sri Krishna.

Whatever is true in the case of an individual is also true in the case of a nation, for individuals make a nation. "As in small, so in great," says ancient Hermes.

The collective karma of a race or a nation is as much a fact in Nature as an individual's karma. The same principles underlying the Karmic laws apply, without much difference, to national and collective karma. Nations rise and fall, empires flourish and are dismembered, on the same ground. The wise heads in a nation should not neglect the dominating sway of this law.

In the midst of a national calamity it is well to remember that nothing can come to us which we have not deserved. We may not be able to see the immediate cause of the catastrophe, but it does not follow that it took place without sufficient cause.

During the last thousand years and more many heart-rending and humiliating events occurred on the soil of Mother India, devastating the whole land, robbing her sons of their precious jewels and even more precious lives.

The incidents of our own times are too fresh in our memories to need any repetition. Have these soul-scorching incidents and cataclysms taken place without any rhyme or reason? No: there is nothing that can happen to us beyond the scope of the good and utterly just laws. In our ignorance we may not be able to trace the immediate cause with certainty, definiteness, and accuracy, but this much is certain beyond the least shadow of doubt, that nothing unmerited can happen to us or to our country.

Our own apathy, indifference, lack of patriotism, communal and caste dissensions, mutual hatred, suspicion, and strife have been the main cause of our present and past degradation.

As our collective karma brought on us the wrath of divine justice and fit retribution closely followed in the wake of our evil deeds (and we deservedly suffered and paid for them heavily), So we can again exert our collective will in the right direction and learn to be wise and circumspect in the light of our past bitter experience and humiliation. In the course of time, we shall again see the eclipse of downfall, servitude and thraldom, and we shall once more be free and great as our forefathers were.

Law of Action and Reaction

The grand law of causation includes the law of action and reaction, the law of compensation and the law of retribution. If there is an action, there must be a reaction. The reaction will be of equal force and of a

similar nature. The world war brought out a strong reaction. There was depression in trade and the money market was tight. There was no peace in the country. People were not happy. Many lives were lost.

Every thought, desire, imagination and sentiment causes reaction. Virtue brings its own reward; vice brings its own punishment. If radiate joy to others, if I relieve the sufferings of others, I will doubles get joy. If I hurt another man, if I cause misery and pain to another,! Will in turn get misery and pain. God neither punishes the wicked nor rewards the virtuous. It is their own karmas that bring reward and punishment. It is the law of action and reaction that brings the fruits No one is to be blamed. The law operates everywhere with unceasing precision and scientific accuracy.

The law of action and reaction operates both in the physical and mental planes. A tennis ball strikes the ground and rises up with equ force. If I strike against a pillow, the pillow is bound to react upon m with equal force. If I speak sweet loving words to anyone, the man returns the feeling of love and speaks sweet words to me also.

Why does one man behave in a rude manner? Why is another man courteous, civil and polite? Why does one man possess good moral character? Why does another possess evil character? Why does one man possess good health, strength and vitality? Why is another man sickly and miserable? Why is one joyful and cheerful while another is depressed and cheerless? These things can be easily explained by the law of action and reaction. Nobody is to be blamed. It is our own karma that brings joy, misery, pleasure, pain, gain, loss, success and defeat. Every one of us is governed by the law of action and reaction. The character or personality of an individual is the total result or collective totality of previous mental action. Thoughts change, habits change, character also changes. Our present character is the outcome of our past, and our future will be shaped by our present acts. Man creates his own character and destiny. He can do and undo his thoughts, habits, character and destiny.

Karma is insentient. There must be a dispenser to allot the fruits for the thoughts and actions of jivas. An overseer knows how much wages are to be given to various workers in the contract work according to the ability and nature of work turned out by them. Even so, the Lord of the universe knows the actions and motives of the jivas and accordingly allots fruits for their actions.

He who thoroughly understands this grand law of action and reaction will never do any wrong action, because he knows that it will react upon him and bring misery and pain. He will always be doing virtuous actions as they will bring peace, joy, strength and unalloyed felicity. Dear friends! Understand this law. Never violate it. Act according to the law and rest in peace. May that silent Law-giver who is hiding Himself behind these names and forms guide you in all your thoughts, speech, and actions! Glory to the law and the Law-giver!

Law of Compensation

The law of compensation operates everywhere in nature’s phenomena. For instance, the seed breaks and a big tree appears from the seed. The tree grows in accordance with the law of compensation. Fuel burns and is destroyed, but there is heat in accordance with the law of compensation. Many articles are cooked in the fire on account of the heat. If there is extreme heat in Bezwada, there is extreme cold in Mt. Kailas or Uttarkashi in the Himalayas. If there are ten scoundrels in a place, there are two sattvic souls to bring compensation. If there is flood-tide at Puri, there is an ebb-tide at Waltair. If there is day in India there is

night in America. Peace follows a war and vice versa. The sulphuric acid in a jar of a battery is consumed but there is electricity produced in the bulb. You get light. The law of compensation operates in the mental plane also.

Every effect has a cause. Every consequence has an antecedent There must be perfect balance between the cause and effect, between the antecedent and consequence. The law of compensation keeps up the balance, and establishes peace, concord, equilibrium, harmony and justice in nature. Think deeply, reflect and cogitate. You will notice that this law of compensation is operating beautifully everywhere in the phenomena of nature. It is inexorable and relentless. No one can defy this immutable and irresistible law.

If you do an evil act you will reap a bad fruit in compensation Sometimes a man complains: “God is unjust. I have always been a truthful man. I never do any wrong to anybody, I am always serving humanity. Yet I have this terrible disease, asthma.” This is incorrect and unreasonable. You will have to connect the effect with the cause always. Whatever you suffer from may appear to be unjust, you may think that you do not deserve it at all, but if you try to find out the cause of this suffering you will doubtless find that it is perfectly right and a just compensation. Then you will have satisfaction. Just try in a few cases. Then you will have no room for complaint or lamentation. You will understand the beautiful working of the law of compensation.

The affairs of our lives are so very intricate and complicated that we find it difficult to trace the cause of the present suffering. Even if we are not able to trace the cause, even if we are not able to understand the working of the law, yet the cause is there. Our intellect is so feeble that it is not able to grasp the antecedent or cause of a suffering or event.

If f you take an individual life as an isolated event that begins with the birth of the physical body and terminates with its death, you cannot find any correct explanation or solution for the affairs of life. You will be groping in darkness and despair. If we deny pre-existence and rebirth, then it will be no compensation for the virtuous man who has done noble actions and for the wicked man who has committed crimes The chain of cause and effect, antecedent and consequence, will be broken abruptly. There will be terrible injustice everywhere. This cannot be. If you connect your present life with the past and the future lives, and then judge the present life from the standpoint of eternal life, then there will be perfect justice. Then there will be perfect compensation.

A man may reap the fruit of compensation for his action either in this life or in the next. Your present life has direct connection with the past and the future. There is perfect continuity of life all throughout, though you take several bodies. There is one common thread that runs through the whole soul-life of countless births. The life of the individual soul (ivatma) consists of countless earthly lives. There is intimate connection between the past, present and future, and the law of compensation operates with perfect justice and harmony. The physical body may change but the events and the law of compensation continue all throughout. Just as the daily life of a man has connection with the life of yesterday and the life of tomorrow, so also one period of earthly life has intimate bearing with the previous and future lives. If the virtuous man who has not done any evil act in this birth suffers, this is due to some wrong act that he may have committed in his previous birth. He will have his compensation in his next birth. If the wicked man who daily does many evil actions apparently enjoys in this birth, this is due to some good karma he must have done in his previous birth. He will have compensation in his next birth, he will reap the fruits of his evil actions in his next birth, with much suffering. The law of

Compensation is inexorable and relentless. Your present life is nothing when compared with the whole soul- life. It is momentary. It is a mere fragment. Whenever you want to find out the cause or antecedent for anything, you will have to go deep into the affairs of the eternal soul-life. Then alone will there be perfect balance between the cause and the effect, between the antecedent and consequence. You will have to judge from a broad view of the eternal soul-life. The law of compensation embraces a wide range of the whole soul-life. Life does not end with the disintegration of this physical body alone. There is reincarnation. There have been countless previous lives also. You will have to take into consideration the widest view of the life of the soul. Then the line is quite clear. Then you will find a perfect, satisfactory solution for all the intricate and complicated affairs of life. Then there will be no room for grumbling or lamentation or misapprehension.

Law of Retribution.

Every wrong action or crime brings its own punishment, in accordance with the law of retribution. The law of causation, the law of action and reaction, the law of compensation and the law of retribution operate together. He who robs another man robs himself. He who hurts another man hurts himself first. He who cheats another cheats himself first. Every wrong action causes punishment first in the inner nature or soul and externally in circumstances in the form of pain misery, loss, failure, misfortune, disease, etc. God never punishes the wicked nor rewards the virtuous. It is their , own karmas that bring reward and punishment.

Man is ignorant. He is swayed by impulses, wrath, attachment, pride and repulsion. He does various sorts of wicked actions. His intellect becomes perverted. He loses his memory. Hi understanding gets clouded by selfishness and greed. He does not know what he is exactly doing. Later on he repents. Discipline of the senses is necessary. He should remember the law of causation, the law of action and reaction, and the law of retribution at every step, at every moment of his daily life. He should control his emotions and impulses through the practice of pranayama and meditation. Then only will he not do any wrong action. Passion,

Any action that makes man go Godward is a virtuous action and that which makes him go away from God is an evil action.

Life necessarily involves activity and work. Work necessarily involves some evil or other. If you dedicate all your action to God you can escape from the contamination of evil.

Law of Resistance

If you eat a mango, if you do any kind of work, it produces an impression in the subconscious mind. This impression is called samskara (impression or tendency). Whatever you see, hear, feel, smell or taste causes impressions. The acts of breathing, thinking, feeling and willing produce impressions. These impressions are indestructible. They can only be fried in toto by asamprajnata samadhi.

Man is a bundle of samskaras or impressions. It is these that bring a man again and again to this physical plane. They are the cause for rebirths. They assume the form of very big waves through memory and internal or external stimuli. The sum-total of all these impressions constitutes the character of a man. If

you do virtuous actions the subconscious mind will contain good impressions and you will possess a good character. If you do evil deeds there will be evil impressions in the subconscious mind, and you will have a bad character. Good samskaras force a man to do good actions and vice versa. If you have a great asset of good samskaras, you will not do any evil action at all. You will have an established good character. Satan can have no influence upon you.

So, actions produce samskaras or impressions or potencies. The impressions coalesce together through repetition, and form habits. Tendencies develop into habits and character. The sum-total of the tendencies of a man is his character. Actions manufacture character and character manufactures will. If the character is pure and strong, the will also will be pure and strong, and vice versa.

It is said that habit is second nature. I always say that habit is all nature, Control of habits is control of nature. Old evil habits can be changed into healthy and desirable habits through the force of the pure irresistible will. A weak impotent man is a slave of habits. He always imagines that habits are innate and that they cannot be changed in one's life-time. This is a mistake. If you want to change the old, morbid evil habits and establish new, healthy and good habits, you will have to struggle hard. The old habits will try to return, resist, persist and recur. Internal fight will go on between the old and new samskaras, between old and new habits. You will always have to be very vigilant, careful and circumspect. You will have to be on the alert like a soldier who is on patrol duty at a magazine in a military cantonment. The old habit asserts itself and says: "O friend! You gave me a seat in your body and mind for twenty long years. You enjoyed several things through me. Why do you try to drive me off now? You are very cruel. I have every right and privilege from nature, my kind mother, to remain here. The entire world runs through habits only. Man clings to tea, coffee, alcohol, tobacco smoking, cinema, novels, gambling and playing cards through the force of habits. The whole world will dwindle into airy nothing but for me. The divine play of the Lord will stop had it not been for my presence in your system. I will not leave my seat in your body." This is the law of resistance. If the man who is attempting to eradicate an evil habit is careless, the old habit will recur again. In the beginning it may recur less frequently and last for a long time; or it may recur less frequently and last for a short time. But you will gain strength and gradually it will perish altogether and the new good habits

Will eventually gain supremacy. If a new even a single attempt in planting a new good habit, the good habit will healthy habit is introduced even once and if you make grow gradually. It will also assert itself to gain a seat in the body and mind. It will work itself till it gets perfect success and defeats the old, morbid habit. This is also another law of nature. There is always a double life in nature, the divine and demoniacal. The fight between them is always going on in the body and the mind. If you struggle very hard the new good habits will establish themselves quickly. You will have rapid progress in the spiritual path. The pure, strong, irresistable will is bound to succeed ultimately. It can do anything. Its powers are ineffable and wonderful.

KARMA AND FREEDOM

Free Will

Though man feels he is weak and helpless at times, he is in reality the master of his own destiny. He can counteract dark forces of evil tendencies and can command Nature through right exertion. How far he is a free agent of his actions must be intelligently understood in the light of vedanta. Then only can one get a satisfactory answer and solution. In the West, various competent men have discussed this matter from various standpoints. They have not yet come to any definite conclusions. They have taken the present only into consideration. This is a sad mistake. The present is only a fragment of infinity. If the infinite past and infinite future are also taken into consideration, they will surely arrive at a definite conclusion that will bring peace and solace to the restless mind. Just as the man who has seen only one side of the shield fights with another man who has seen only the other side of the shield, so also people who only know partial truths fight amongst themselves and engage in useless controversies and debates. Just as the man who has seen the two sides of the shield can easily settle the dispute of two persons who have seen one side of the shield only, so also a vedantin alone, who has full knowledge of the whole truth, can settle the dispute of those people who are trying to find out whether and how far man is a free agent of his actions.

Determinists say that the will of a man is as much bound by the law of causation as the rest of the phenomena of the universe. Ethics will fall down to pieces if there is no freedom for a man. There cannot be surely any moral responsibility where there is no freedom. How could a man be made to account for his action, unless he is a free agent of hi deeds? How could reward or punishment be meted out with justice to a man if he has done an action out of compulsion, but not out of free choice? Man will be like an automaton or block of wood, his hands and feet being chained down tightly.

Freedom is man's birthright. Freedom is immortality. Freedom's knowledge, peace and bliss. Consciously or unconsciously, wittingly unwittingly, all are attempting for this freedom. The consciousness of the Self makes this idea of freedom ingrained in the mind of man. It is hidden in the consciousness of the Self. Though he has every nothing to eat, though he is in very adverse circumstances, there is a peculiar instinct in man that prompts him to think that he is alway free. Because the ever free Self is at the back of his mind, sentiments and feelings, he feels that he is free. He knows that he is bound and that he is encased in this tabernacle of flesh. He is fully aware that he is a slave of delusion and ignorance: and yet something inside tells him th he is free at the same time. He has this double feeling because in essence he is the all-pervading mass of wisdom. He gets these flashes or glimpses of freedom even while he labours under straitened circumstances. There are encouragements for the struggling soul that come from within. For instance, when he is in a dying condition and doctors have pronounced the case as absolutely hopeless yet there is a shrill inner voice from within that says: "I am immortal, I am free". He cherishes an inherent feeling: 'I am free though I appear to be apparently bound. This bondage is illusory."

Let me repeat here the words of Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita, that bespeak of the freedom of man in doing actions: "*Let m raise himself by himself, let him not lower himself; for he alone is the friend of himself, he alone is the enemy of himself." (V1:5)*

"To him who has conquered himself by himself his own self is the friend himself, but to him who has not (conquered) himself, his own self stands in place of an enemy like the (external) foe." (VI:6)

The Katha Upanishad also echoes the same idea: "*Awake, an and, having approached a learned teacher, learn."*

In conclusion I wish to point out once more that man is a free agent. He is independent in doing actions. Whatever his present condition may be he can have a glorious future through right exertion and right thinking. Many have achieved success and greatness, many have reached the goal of life through right exertion. This holds good for all. Man is ever free. May freedom be the goal of thy life! May all of us exert in the right direction to achieve freedom, the birthright of man! May that supreme Being guide us in all our actions!

As You Sow So Shall You Reap

This world runs on well-established laws. There is no chaos. There is no such thing as accident or chance in life. Events occur in succession or order. There is perfect harmony. The child grows, attains boyhood and adolescence, begets children, decays and dies. The child becomes a father and the father brings forth a child. How is it that a human being is born of a human being, a horse of a horse, a cat of a cat, a dog of a dog, and a monkey of a monkey? A seed sprouts and comes out with leaves, stems, twigs and flowers. It brings forth fruits and seeds in due seasons. A seed from this fruit brings forth a tree like the parent tree. The seed of a mango tree cannot give rise to the growth of a jambu tree. How is it that only a mango tree comes out of a mango seed, a jambu tree from the jambu seed, an apple tree from an apple seed? This is a great mystery indeed. There is some mysterious power that is working behind all these phenomena. That mysterious, all- pervading power or intelligence is God. He who sows paddy reaps paddy. He who sows green gram reaps green gram. He who sows oranges reaps oranges. Man sows the seed to attain what he desires to reap. Even so, man does evil deeds and reaps the fruits of pain. He who does virtuous actions reaps good fruits. One reaps the fruits according to his karmas or actions.

How is it that one man is a king, another is a beggar, one is a genius while another is a fool, one man is very wealthy, while another is in want, one is always in good health while another is constantly ailing, one is handsome while another is ugly, one man is wicked while another is a saint, one dies at the age of ten while another dies at the age of ninety? Is this due to heredity? Certainly not. The operating cause is Karma. He who has done tapas, meditation, had satsang with mahatmas, served saints and devotees and led a life of purity, is born as a yogi or a saint in this birth. He who had done vicious actions in his previous birth is born as a wicked man. He who had done a lot of charity in his previous birth is born as a king. It is only the theory of Karma that can explain things beautifully and satisfactorily. Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita: "*Whosoever at the end leaves the body, thinking of any being, to that being only does he go, O son of Kunti, because of his constant thought of that being." (VIII:6)*

Ignorance, desire and selfish action are the three knots which bind a man to the wheel of samsara. Man first entertains a desire to have a blanket. He says: "Winter is very severe now. I desire to get a blanket" Then he begins to think where he can get it. He now decides to get it from the local department store. He takes the money, proceeds to the store and purchases the blanket. He had desire at first. Then the thought made its appearance. Then there was karma or the action of moving and purchasing. The three things – the desire, the thought and the action- always go together. Desire and thought are internal acts. Action is external. If a man entertains good desires, he gets good thoughts and does good actions. If a man cherishes evil desires, he develops evil thoughts and does evil actions. It is the thought that develops the

character of a man. If one cultivates thoughts of mercy, love, tolerance, generosity and understanding he exhibits these virtues in his character and behaviour towards others in society. The same rule applied to the sowing of seeds in the soil, also applies here. If one sows the virtue of mercy, he reaps a good harvest of mercy. He becomes a merciful man. If one sows cruelty, he reaps a good harvest of cruelty. He does cruel deeds. One can change his habits, thoughts and character by developing good habits and thoughts. It is the thought that moves the body to action. There is thought behind every action. There is desire behind thought.

Do not allow the desires to control your thoughts. Do not be carried away easily by all sorts of desires through emotion. When a desire manifests, cogitate, think well. Reason out whether this particular desire towards the particular object will bring maximum happiness and minimum pain. If it is otherwise, reject it ruthlessly. Do not try to fulfil it. You must control desire through thoughts. You must not allow a desire to overrule the thought. You must slowly gain the strength to control a desire. A desire, when controlled, becomes transmuted into will. You will gain will-force. Many people fall a prey to their desires and are tossed about hither and thither helplessly like a straw in the wind. This is a great pity. That man who has gained control over desires and thoughts is really a powerful and happy man

Learn to become wise. Learn to discriminate. Learn to control thoughts and desires. Watch your thoughts carefully. Do not allow any evil thought to enter the gates of the mental factory. Nip it in the bud. Always entertain holy, sublime thoughts and desires. Renounce unholy thoughts and unholy desires. Develop passion for Self-realisation. This one strong and holy desire will annihilate all other worldly desires. Understand well the theory of Karma. Cut the three knots of ignorance and realise your own essential nature. Then you are beyond the operation of the law of Karma. Then you are a jivanmukta or a liberated sage even while living. This is the highest goal of life. This is your highest duty. All other duties are secondary and self-imposed through egoism, ignorance and delusion.

Man Can Outgrow Environments

It is not true that man is the result of his environmental forces, because the facts always prove the contrary. Many of the world's greatest men have been born in poverty and in adverse circumstances. Many who have been born in slums and filthy surroundings have risen to the highest status in the world. They have won laurels of fame, and distinguished themselves in politics, literature and poetry. They have become brilliant geniuses and beacon-lights of the world. How do you account for this?

People of gigantic will have developed it through actions done in countless births. It is not in one birth that man develops a mighty will. He does various good actions in several births. The potencies of these actions collect together, and in one birth the struggling man bursts out like Buddha, Jesus and Sankaracharya.

Sri T. Muthuswamy Aiyer, the first Indian High Court Judge in Madras, was born in absolute poverty. He had to study at night under municipal lanterns. He had insufficient food. He was clad in He rags. struggled hard and achieved greatness. He rose above the environmental forces by his strong will and iron determination. The life of James Ramsay MacDonald is also worth mentioning. He rose from poverty to power, from a field-labourer to the status of Prime Minister of Britain. His first job was addressing envelopes for ten shillings a week. He was too poor to buy tea, so that he drank water instead. His main

meal every day for months was a three-penny beefsteak pudding. He was a pupil-teacher. He took great interest in politics and science. He was a journalist. Gradually, through right exertion, he rose to the position of a Prime Minister.

Sri Sankaracharya, the exponent of Advaita philosophy, a spiritual giant and a brilliant genius, was born in very poor, unfavourable environment and circumstances. There are thousands of instances like these. It is quite obvious, therefore, that unfavourable environments cannot annihilate the potential greatness and excellence of the future geniuses and that one can outgrow environment through diligen application, integrity, sincerity of purpose, iron will and st determination. Strong

Every man is born with his innate tendencies and potentialities The mind is not a blank sheet of paper. It contains the impressions of thoughts and actions of the previous births. Good tendencies and potentialities are valuable assets for a man. Even though he is placed in an unfavourable environment they give him protection against extraneous, undesirable, hostile influences. They help his growth and evolution. In the Bhagavad Gita Lord Krishna says: "*There he recovers the characteristics belonging to his former body and with these he again labours for perfection, O joy of the Kurus." (VI:43))*

Sometimes if you are very timid God will place you in such circumstances wherein you will be forced to exhibit courage and presence of mind by risking your life. Those world figures who have risen to eminence have utilised all opportunities to the best advantage. God shapes the mind of human beings by giving them opportunities Remember that in your weakness lies your strength, because you will be always on the alert to safeguard yourself.

Poverty has its own virtues. It infuses humility, strength, power of endurance and the spirit of struggle and perseverance, whereas luxury begets laziness, pride, weakness, inertia and all sorts of evil habits. De not grumble, therefore, of bad environment. Create your own mental world and environment. That man who tries to evolve or grow adverse environment will be a very strong man indeed. Nothing can shake him. He will be of sterner stuff. He will have strong nerves. Man is certainly not a creature of environment or circumstances. He can control and modify them by his capacities, thoughts, good actions and right exertions. Therefore, dear brothers, exert, conquer nature and rejoice in the eternal Atma.

Man is the Master of His Destiny

Some ignorant people say: "Karma does everything. It is al destiny. If I am destined by my Karma to be like this or like that, why then should I exert? It is my destiny only." This is fatalism. This will bring inertia, stagnation and misery. This is perfect misunderstanding of the laws of Karma. This is a fallacious. An intelligent man will certainly not put such a question. You have made your own destiny from within by your own thoughts and actions. You have a free will to choose now. A rogue is not an eternal rogue. Put him in the company of a saint and he will change in no time. He will think and act in a different way and will change his destiny. He will become saintly in character Dacoit Ratnagar was changed into Sage Valmiki by the current of Rishi Narada. Jagai and Madai, two rogues of the first order, were changed by the current of Nityananda, disciple of Lord Gouranga.

You will have to desire, to think and act only. You can change Karma in any way you like. You can become a yogi or jnani by right desire, by right thinking and by right action. You can attain the position Indra or Brahma by good actions. Man is not a helpless being. He has a free will of his own.

Man sows an action or thought and reaps a habit of doing or thinking. He sows a habit and reaps a character. He sows a character and reaps a destiny. Habit is second nature or rather first nature itself. Man has made his own destiny by thinking and acting. He can change his destiny. He is the master of his own destiny. There is no doubt of this. By right thinking and enquiry and strong self effort he can become master of his destiny. Markandeya changed his destiny through tapas and worship of Lord Siva. Visvamitra changed his destiny through vigorous tapas. You can also do so, if you have strong will and iron determination. Vasistha preaches self-effort to Sri Rama in the Yoga Vasistha. Savitri changed the destiny of her husband Satyavan through the power of her strict observance of the rules of a chaste wife. Just as you can change your way of writing from a slant style to a vertical style, so also you can change your destiny by changing your mode of thinking. Now you are thinking: 'I am Mr. So and So,' by identifying yourself with the body and other limiting adjuncts. Now start the anti-current. Think: 'I am Brahman. I am the immortal Self in all. I am Your destiny will be changed. Just as you think, so you will become. All-pervading light, intelligence or pure consciousness.' Practise this steadily. Feel and realise.

An advocate of Lahore once asked me: "Swamiji, you say that the law of Karma operates with unerring precision in all men. A man desires, thinks and acts. If the actions that I perform now are the outcome of my past thoughts, and if my past thoughts are the result of my desires of the still distant past, am I not helplessly bound? I am like a piece of straw tossed about hither and thither, I must act in accordance with my thought. I must think in accordance with my desire. There is no hope for my freedom of action and thinking. This does not appeal to my reason at all. Kindly throw light on this important subject."

I replied: "Look here, Mr. Dowlatram! Man is gaining new experiences and new knowledge every day. Mind is evolving every second. There is every possibility for him to change his desires, thoughts and actions. Suppose there is a thief and he does pilfering. He removes the things of other people without their knowledge and is put into jail. People hate him. He gains many experiences. He always feels miserable. He now decides to give up pilfering. He changes his desires. He now wants to lead an honest life. His old tendencies and thoughts try to resist and recur again and again. But through resolute efforts be can change his thoughts, desires and actions and can become a very good charitable man and attain perfection, freedom and immortality"

Mark the words of the Yoga Vasistha in this connection: *"There is nothing like destiny other than the effect of our previous efforts." (II:6-4)*

"Our previous efforts are called our destiny." (II:6-36)

"Our achievements are determined by our efforts. Our effort is therefore our destiny." (II:6-2)

"Our previous and present efforts, in case they are in contrary directions, are the two rams fighting against each other. The more powerful of the two always overthrows the other." (II:6-10)

"Whether they are the past or the present efforts, it is the stronger ones that determine our destiny. In either case, it is man's own effort that determines his destiny by virtue of its strength." (II:6-8)

"Man determines his own destiny by his thought. He can make those things also happen which were not destined to happen." (V:24-28)

"The soul of man is powerful enough. Only those things happen in this world which it creates by its own free efforts, and not others." (V:24-35-36)

“One should therefore overcome one’s unfavourable destiny (the effect of one’ past efforts) by greater effort in the present, gnashing his teeth.” (II:5-11)

“There is nothing in the world which cannot be achieved by man by the right sort of effort." (III:96-8)

Free Will Versus Fatalism

The The controversy between free will and fatalism is still going on in West and no one has come to any definite conclusion. It is a great that the doctrine of Karma is mistaken for fatalism. Fatalism is the doctrine that all events are subject to fate, and happen by unavoidable pity necessity.

Fate is otherwise known as luck or fortune. That undefinable mysterious something which brings trials, successes and failures to man, which shapes and moulds him by teaching lessons of various sorts, which takes care of him like a mother, which brings various sorts of experiences, which brings cloudy days and days of bright sunshine, which raises a beggar to the level of a landlord and hurls down a mighty potentate to the level of a street-beggar, which gives different kinds of fruits and experiences to two people of equal talents and capacities, which made Napoleon at one time a terror in the eyes of the people and at another time a prisoner, and which makes a certain portion of the life of a man quite stormy and another portion quite smooth, is called fate. Fate educates and instructs man. However whimsically the fate may appear to operate, it works in harmony with the law of causation.

Fate is one’s own creation. Man acts and thinks and develops his own character. He creates a web like the spider or the silk-worm and entangles himself in its meshes on account of the three knots of – ignorance, desire and action. He himself has enthroned fate to the level of a king and obeys its orders, owing to his ignorance and its effects.

The doctrine of Karma is diametrically opposed to the doctrine of fatalism. Fatalism causes inertia, lethargy, weakness of will and bondage. Fatalism annihilates faith. It induces terrible fear in the people. It destroys ethics. It checks growth and evolution, whereas the doctrine of Karma is an incentive to action to better one’s condition. It is a source of solace. It gives man an assurance of a broader and happier life. It presupposes freedom of the will. Freedom is the essence of Karma. It gives opportunities for growth and evolution. The doctrine of Karma affords a most rational and scientific explanation of what is called fate. It gives a positive definite word of assurance that although the present (of which he himself is the creator or the author) is unalterable and irrevocable, he may better his future by changing his thoughts, habits, tendencies and mode of action.

Herein lies great comfort, strength, encouragement and consolation to the desperate man. Herein lies a strong impetus for the man to struggle and exert for improving himself. Even a forlorn and helpless man is made cheerful when he understands this doctrine of Karma. It brings hope to the hopeless, help to the helpless, joy to the cheerless and new strength to the weak. It braces up a sunken man. It is an ideal 'pick-me-up' for the depressed and gloomy. It teaches: "Do not blame anybody when you suffer. Do not accuse God. Blame yourself first. You will have to reap what you have sown in your previous birth. Your present sufferings are due to your own bad actions in your past life. You are yourself the author of the present state. The present is unchangeable. Do not weep, do not cry over spilt milk, there is no use. You will not gain anything by so doing. Instead of weeping over the failure of crops during last year, go on ploughing this year. You will get abundant rain this year and rich harvest. Do virtuous actions now. Think rightly. Act

rightly. You will have a brilliant and a glorious future." How beautiful and soul-stirring is this magnanimous doctrine of Karma! It develops faith and supports ethics. It another man, you hurt yourself."

Every act produces in the performer a double effect, one in the inner nature in the form of a tendency, good or bad, and the other in the form of fruit, reward or punishment. The past action influences the present life in two ways, first in the form of character or tendency internally, and as fate externally. If you do an action it creates a subtle impression in the subconscious mind. The impression causes a tendency. Tendency develops into a habit by repetition of the actions The habit manifests as character. Character develops into destiny. This is the order: impression, tendency, habit, character and destiny.

The faculty of choosing is termed will. This will is free by its own nature. Man has a free will by his birthright. It asserts itself at every moment of our lives. Bear in mind that every small act that you perform is the result of triple cojoint forces-freewill, character and fate. The sphere of activity varies according to the nature of your Karma and the character formed by it. If you have done virtuous actions in your previous birth and if you have developed an character, you will have a wider field of activity and vice versa.

KARMA AND REINCARNATION

Karma and Evolution

Sri R. Krishnaswami Aiyer, M.A., B.L., writes about Karma in the Hindu Mind dated October, 1935:

(a) Karmas Classified: Actions are good, bad or mixed.

The results of good actions are:

(1) Purification of the mind, that is to say, the removal from the mind of its drossness which is the effect of thoughts of narrow selfishness and gross sensuality.

(2) Happiness in the higher regions, during the period between the death and rebirth in this physical world. If the action is of an exceptional nature, the thinker may even be made an office-bearer with an authority in such higher regions.

(3) Coming back, as man again, to earth-life with facilities for purification of mind. If the action, however, is done without attachment to its fruits and the thinker has been going along the path of jnana (knowledge) or along the higher regions of the path of bhakti (devotion to the supreme universal Soul) having his mind completely purified and possessing faith in the revealed truth that he and the divine object of his devotion are in fact one in the Self, he is not bound to return again to earth-life. The results of bad actions are:

(1) The mind becomes more and more impure.

(2) Suffering in the nether region or hell during the period between the death and rebirth here.

(3) If the action is very bad, after suffering in the nether r the thinker is made to take his birth in this world in the lower region. Animal or vegetable kingdom as part of his punishment. In some cases these lower births immediately follow the previous earthlife. (4) After undergoing his sufferings in hell or as a the aspirant comes again to assume a human body. He is then placed amidst very unfavourable environments to his progress onwards. These bad environments or advancement are in consequence of his own sub-human jiva, impediments to previous errors and

Misdoings. Mixed actions are partly bad and partly good. Good actions make you a God in heaven, bad actions throw you in lower wombs, mixed actions give you a human birth. If you rob a man and feed the poor, it is a mixed action. If you earn money by unlawful means and build a temple or hospital this is mixed action. If you get money by cheating a man and construct an ashram for sannyasins, this is also a mixed action.

The results of mixed actions are:

(1) The mind becomes pure in certain respects and more impure in certain others.

(2) The aspirant suffers for some time in hell, and enjoys for some time in the happy regions above.

(3) Afterwards he ordinarily takes birth here again as man.

(b) The Western Theory of Evolution is Unsound.

Some of the Western philosophers propound a theory that there is gradual progress from the mineral condition to the vegetable, from the vegetable to the animal, and from the animal to the human, and call it the theory of evolution. In the first place no religion of the world supports such a theory, and, as Benjamin Kidd in his Social Evolution says: "The tendency of the doctrine of evolution has been generally considered to be on the whole anti-religious." They say that evolution is going on in the universe; but about what it is that is evolving, they have nothing to say. They observe different natures, bodies and objects in the universe occupying different positions in some respects; and, seeing that one is more 'advanced' than another, they make regular scales noting the different degrees of advancement. But they do not say that what is now found in the more advanced state of being must, in its essence, have been in existence formerly and must have been then In a less advanced condition. In other words, they do not say that the underlying entity which bears a more advanced form or exhibits a higher state or condition today, is the same that formerly appeared in a coarser garb or functioned in a lower kind of existence. In fact, they have in general ignored the necessity, nay, even the possibility, of the continuing presence of the subsisting reality and have only directed attention to some stations on the road of evolution without caring to know whether there is anyone journeying along the road, and, if so, who he is.

No evolution is possible from the stage of the mineral to that of the vegetable, for there is nothing in the mineral that can evolve. Dr. Bose's discoveries of the modern day can have reference only to the spiritual life, not the life of any jiva in the mineral. The whole mineral kingdom has emerged out of the tamasic aspect of maya and it forms the material which goes to make the bodies of the jivas and their means and places of support. Mineral matter not composing the body of any jiva is called 'inanimate' or 'inorganic', not because there is no life at all in it, but because there is no separate co-ordinating life-principle connecting together the several atoms in harmonious co-operation for serving some common end. It is the presence or the absence of such a separate connecting life that makes, in fact, all the difference between the organic and the inorganic sides of nature.

Again, as regards the alleged evolution from the vegetable to animal and from the animal to the human, the Western evolutionists do not actually trace the passage of any entity from a lower to a higher state of being. They are only able to see that one being is more 'advanced' than another and that this universe is inhabited by beings of manifold gradation of advancement, physical and mental. They mentally arrange the beings under different groups and these groups as well as the beings placed in each of these groups are then arranged according to a regular and graduated scale of advancement. They then perceive that the ladder of advancement created by them in their imagination presents a really beautiful appearance and they infer that nature, beautiful as she is, must have brought about the advancement of beings only in the order in which the rungs of the ladder appear. A big library may contain a large number of books of different gradations of thought or size. Will it be proper to infer, then, that a book written by an advanced author has 'evolved' out of a book written by an ordinary man, or that a big volume has come out of a small booklet? The present-day theory of evolution has p strong foundation.

(c) True Evolution.

What then is true evolution? It is, as once before stated, the progress of the thinker in man from his present condition of limitedness to the state of the unlimited Self. Progress of the thinker means

improvement and growth of mind through which he thinks. In the physical plane, all vegetable and animal bodies develop out of the life-germ, the unit cell. The embryonic cell sometimes divides itself into two or more cells and sometimes, as in the case of the lower forms of life, becomes associated with new cells drawn from outside. In any case, development of the embryo implies multiplication of the cells. More multiplication of the cells again cannot make a living body. Along with it there is also the widening or expansion of the life within so as to control all the cells together. Similarly, a man's mind is said to grow or expand when his thoughts extend beyond his physical body and beyond his limited personality. As the original unit cell is the earliest and lowest state of the physical body, thoughts of one's own interests alone belong to the lowest stage of the mind. The mind grows when the interests of others are also considered, as the physical body grows up packing together more cells. As there is connecting life for all the cells together, selfless thoughts or thoughts of others' interests should be bound up together by a connecting and unifying knowledge that all are only the Self. The end of the evolution of the thinker is reached when the evolving mental life becomes, by expansion, identical with the all-including life, the universal Self. If, however, his thoughts and actions are directed exclusively towards personal and selfish ends, his mind contracts more and more and recedes still further from the path of evolution. He should therefore think only such thoughts and do only such actions as may widen his mind and raise him up in evolution. The mind has to expand and expand until the limiting mind-covering, becoming very thin, is torn asunder. When the limitations of the aspirant cease to exist, his inner Self shines in His infinitude of existence, consciousness and bliss, for it was only He, the only one and the real Self that was appearing till then as enclosed in a covering made of mind stuff.

Doctrine of Reincarnation

What is reincarnation? Reincarnation is the doctrine that the soul enters this life not as fresh creation, but after a long course of previous existences, and will have to its final destination. Pass through many more before it reaches

The doctrine of reincarnation is accepted by the majority of mankind of the present day. It has been held as true by the mightiest Eastern nations. The ancient civilization of Egypt was built upon this doctrine, and it was handed over to Pythagoras, Empedocles, Plato, Virgil and Ovid who propagated it through Greece and Italy. It is the keynote of Plato's philosophy when he says that all knowledge is reminiscence. It was wholly adopted by the Neo-Platonists like Plotinus and Proclas. The hundreds of millions of Hindus, Buddhists and Jains have made this doctrine the foundation of their philosophy, religion, government and social institutions. It was a cardinal point in the religion of the Persian Unagi. The doctrine of metempsychosis was an essential principle of the Druid faith and was impressed upon the Celts, the Gauls and the Britons. Among the Arab philosophers it was a favourite idea. The rites and ceremonies of the Romans, Druids and Hebrews expressed this faith forcibly. The Jews adopted it after the Babylonian captivity. John the Baptist was to them a second Elijah. The Roman Catholic purgatory seems to be a makeshift, contrived to take its place. Philosophers like Kant, Schelling and Schopenhauer have upheld this doctrine; theologians like Julius Muller, Dorner and Edward Beecher have maintained it; and today it reigns over the Burmese, Siamese, Chinese, Japanese, Tartar, Tibetan, East Indian and Ceylonese, including at least 750 millions of mankind or nearly two thirds of the human race. Is it not wonderful then that this great and grand philosophical education which the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains gave to the world centuries before the Christian era should or could be blotted out of existence from the Western and

European world by the soul-blighting and absurd dogmas of the dark ages that supervened? By the persecution of the wise men and destruction of innumerable works in the library of Constantinople, the Church hierarchy managed to plunge the whole of Europe into mental darkness which has given the world the black record of the inquisition and the loss of millions of human lives through religious wars and persecutions.

Here is a challenge to the non-believers of the Hindu theory of transmigration. Recently a little girl, Santi Devi, gave a vivid description of her past lives in Delhi. There was a great sensation in Delhi and Mathura, nay, throughout the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh). There was a great assembly of persons to hear her statements. She recognised her husband and child of her previous birth. She pointed out the place where money was kept, and an old well in the house which is covered now. All her statements were duly verified and corroborated by respectable eye-witnesses. Several cases like this have occurred in Rangoon, Sitapur and various other places. They are quite common now. In such cases the jiva takes immediate rebirth with the old astral body. That is the reason why memory of the previous birth comes in. He did not stay in the mental world for a long time to rebuild a new mind and astral body according to his previous experiences of the world.

The suckling of a child and the act of swimming of a duckling these instinctive acts are proofs of memory which must be the result of their corresponding and inseparable impressions left by the same acts in a previous incarnation, never mind when and where. Every act leaves impressions in the subconscious mind, which causes memory. Memory in its own turn leads to fresh actions and fresh impressions. This cycle goes on from eternity like the analogy of the seed and tree.

We have boy-geniuses. A boy of five becomes an expert on the piano or violin. Sri Jnanadev wrote his commentary on the Bhagavad Gita – Jnaneshwari – when he was fourteen years old. There have been boy-mathematicians. How could you explain these strange phenomena? They are not freaks of nature. Only the theory of transmigration could explain all these things. If one man gets deep grooves in his mind by learning music or mathematics in this birth, he carries these impressions to the next birth and becomes a prodigy in these sciences even when he is a boy.

According to the Christian faith, the ultimate fate of the righteous is life eternal; of the evil, everlasting fire or eternal damnation. How could this be? No opportunity is afforded to the sinner to purify himself in later births. What possible motion in the brain causes the idea I am I? This recognition of a real unit does not vary from the cradle to the grave. From childhood to old age, during the whole course of the total change of all brain molecules, the idea ‘I am I’ is undisturbed. This ‘I am I’ is the soul. It is this soul which makes memory possible. It has its own consciousness and not the consciousness of anyone else, therefore it is a unit existing by itself. The law of the conservation of energy is true in the physical as well as in the spiritual world. Therefore, as no atorn can be created or destroyed, so also no soul-entity can be created or destroyed. No powers in the universe can annihilate it.

Reincarnation is the only doctrine which gives a complete solution to the much disputed question of original sin. There cannot be greater injustice in the world than the fact that I am now suffering for the transgression of my ancestor. Adonis’ responsibility for our sin is only a makeshift of the theologians. No one but the individual himself can be blamed for his wrong doing. Are not the courts of law of the United States founded on the ideas of justice? Will any judge sitting on the throne of justice be justified in accepting the death – the voluntary suicide of Mr. B. – as proper retribution for the murder committed by Mr. A.? And if he does that, will not the same judge be arraigned before a superior court having knowingly

abetted the suicide of B.? And still we are asked to believe that the guilt of one man can be washed by the suffering of another.

But the doctrine of reincarnation assists most when we look at the inequality, injustice and evil in the world and seek the solution. Why is one man born rich and another poor? Why is one man born in Central Africa among the cannibals and the other in a peaceful part of India? Why is Queen Victoria born to rule over the territories on which the sun never sets and why is a labourer in Burma to work as a slave in an Englishman's tea-garden? What is the cause of this apparent injustice? Even those who have belief in the personal Creator of the universe must believe in this doctrine of reincarnation in order to exonerate God from the charge of maliciousness.

Even in the New Testament there is sufficient evidence for reincarnation. In St. John IX:2 a question is put to Jesus by his disciples: "Which did sin, this man or his parents that he was born blind?" This refers to two popular theories of the time Moses who taught that the sins of fathers would descend on children to the third and the fourth generation (transmitted retribution), and the one, that of other that of the doctrine of reincarnation. Jesus merely says that neither the man's sins nor his father's sin was the cause of his blindness; he does not deny the pre-existence of that man.

People may ask that if this doctrine is true, how is it that we do not remember our past incarnations. I will ask such people in what way we exercise the faculty of memory. Certainly, so long as we are l body we exercise it through the brain. In passing from one incarnation to the other the soul does not carry its former brain in the new body Even during the course of one life, do we always remember our past doings? Can anyone remember that wonderful epoch, the infancy?

If you have knowledge of the raja yogic technique of perceiving the impressions directly through the process of samyama (dharana, dhyana and samadhi at one time), you can remember your past lives. In Raja Yoga philosophy of Patanjali Maharishi you will find:

"*By perceiving the impressions, comes the knowledge of past life." (III:18)*

All experiences that you have had in various births remain in the form of impressions or residual potencies in the subconscious mind They remain in a very, very subtle form, just as sound remains in a subtle form in a gramophone record. These subtle impressions assume the forms of waves and you get memory of past experiences. Therefore, if a yogi can do samyama on these past experiences in the subconscious mind, he can remember all the details of all his past lives.

Man can hardly attain perfection in one life. He has to develop his heart, intellect and hand. He has to mould his character in a perfect manner. He has to develop various virtuous qualities such as mercy, tolerance, love, forgiveness, equal vision, courage, etc. He has to learn many lessons and experiences in this great world-school. Therefore he has to take many lives. One small life is a part of the long series that stretches behind you and in front of you. It is quite insignificant. One gains a little experience only. He evolves very little. During the course of one life man does many evil actions. He does very few good actions. Very few die as good men. Christians believe that one life determines and settles everything. How could this be? How can the everlasting future of man be made to depend on that one small, little insignificant life? If in that life he believes in Christ, he will get eternal peace in heaven; if he is an unbeliever in that life, he will get eternal damnation, he will be thrown forever into the lake of fire or into a horrible hell. Is this not the most irrational doctrine? Should he not get his chances for correction and

improvement? The doctrine of reincarnation is quite rational. It gives ample chances for man's rectification and gradual evolution.

Three Kinds of Karma

There are three kinds of karma:

Prarabdha is one's own previous karmas which gave rise to the t birth. Sanchita is the accumulated karmas which are yet to bear fruit, of which prarabdha forms a part. Agami is the current actions present which will fructify in future.

Sanchita are destroyed by Brahma jnana. One should enjoy the prarabdha anyhow. Agami are not actions to the jnani, who has the feeling of being a witness only.

The case in which arrows are stored represents our sanchita karmas; the arrow that is ready for discharging represents our agami karmas; and the arrow which has already left the bow, which cannot return, which must hit the target, represents the prarabdha karmas. Or, the articles in the store-room represent the sanchita; the articles that are put in the shop for sale represent prarabdha; the daily sale proceeds represent the agami.

Prarabdha can only be exhausted by experiencing its fruits in the present life. A child is born blind, deaf or dumb – this is due to prarabdha. One man dies at the age of ninety, another at thirty-five and the third at eighteen: this is due to prarabdha. Caste, longevity and enjoyment are all due to prarabdha. A virtuous man suffers, he is starving. A scoundrel is in a prosperous condition. An aged mother loses her only son who was her sole prop. A young girl who was newly married loses her husband. Instances like these can be multiplied ad infinitum. In all these cases prarabdha operates unerringly with scientific accuracy and precision. See how it operates. A lady from Paris came to me for an interview. She said that ever since she landed in India she was quite at home in the country. India was very familiar to her. She liked India and Indians very much. Within three months she forgot all about her parents and native place. She liked the Indian way of dressing, so she changed her dress. She wanted to domicile in India for the practice of yoga. This clearly shows that in her previous birth she was born in India. Another American lady lived in Lakshmanjhula near Rishikesh fifteen years ago. She lived on alms, led the life of an Hindus say that wherever there is food and drink for a man, there he ascetic and died on the banks of the Ganges. This is all prarabdha. Will be dragged. You cannot remain in a place even for a second more, when it is finished.. There are three kinds of prarabdha – iccha prarabdha (with desire), aniccha prarabdha (without desire) and pareccha praradha A person knows the evil consequences of his actions, and yet he is

Impelled to do them. Here he is swayed by iccha prarabdha, that prarabdha which creates desire. A man knows that taking sweetmeats is not good when he has diarrhoea, and yet he takes them. He commits theft and has illicit intercourse with the wife of another person. These are all instances of the iccha prarabdha. He is forced to do forbidden actions by the force of prarabdha, although he has strong conviction that they will bring calamity upon himself.

There is difference between the iccha prarabdha of vivekins and non-vivekins. Non-vivekins think that they are the agents of all actions. They are egoistic. They do mischief to other people. They always do evil

actions. They are always full of misery. Vivekins eradicate attachment, desires and egoism. They have no desire for wealth. They lead a peaceful life and serve others.

Aniccha prarabdha is common to vivekins and non-vivekins. Both suffer from the heat of the sun, wind, rain, disease, accidental injury to the head by striking against the door, lightning-stroke, etc. This cannot be prevented even by the Lord. Pareccha prarabdha is common to both. One man prostrates before a vivekin or a non-vivekin and implores him to render some help or service. He has to undergo the pleasure and pain that accrue from this work.

The seed-like subtle impressions of the entire accumulated actions lie dormant in the mental space. When a great jnani gets illumination, through direct intuitive knowledge, that he is not the five sheaths but transcendental to them and also their witnessing intelligence, the Atman, then the subtle impressions of sanchita karma lying in the mental space of the manomaya kosha remain in the sheath only; they can no longer enchain the liberated jnani.

Just as a potter, having set the wheel in motion, removes his hand allowing the wheel to revolve till the momentum previously imparted to it is exhausted, in the same way the jnani even after his attainment of jivanmukti through self-knowledge continues enjoying the fruit of his prarabdha karma up to the end of the present body. Prarabdha is exhausted by no other means than by enjoying its fruit.

Just as the potter's wheel after being set in motion continues revolving even after the connection with the potter is cut off, so also a jnani continues to enjoy the fruits of his prarabdha karma; but they cannot produce the seed of sanchita karma on account of his non achment or absence of craving for them.

The enjoyment of the fruit of prarabdha karma falls to his lot by the force of prarabdha. He has not the least desire for them as through self-knowledge he has realized their impermanent and unreal nature. So their enjoyment does not in any way affect him. The experience of happiness and misery is impotent to produce the seeds of sanchita karma owing to his non-attachment, as the parched grains are impotent germinate and produce any crop.

Brahma jnana annihilates agami karmas (current actions) of a jnani as he has no contact with them; that is, he is untouched or unaffected by his actions, like the lotus leaf which is unaffected by the drops of water on it.

Thus the jnani gets disentangled from the fetters of all actions.

Significance of Karma

Karma is the sum-total of works good, bad and mixed- which an individual performs during his life. It is the collective totality of man's actions. It is these actions that determine his future existence. There is double retribution or reward for man's virtuous actions. He gets a good birth with suitable surroundings, environments and opportunities for his good actions; this is one reward. Another reward is that he gets a place in the abode of heaven also. But after the consummation of happiness he is sure to be hurled back to this physical plane. Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita:

"*They, having enjoyed the spacious heaven world, their holiness withered, come back to this world of death. Following the virtues enjoined by the three (Vedas) and desiring objects of desires, they attain to the state of coming and going." (IX:21)*

Karmas of human beings are different, so they are different in temperament, nature, etc. One man is healthy, another is sick. One lives for eighty years, another for six months. One is rich, another is poor. One is beautiful, another is ugly. One is intelligent, another is dull. One is truthful, another is a liar. If Karma is the same in all all will be alike. Karma is mysterious. Mysterious and deep is the path of action. Even the wise are perplexed.

It is difficult to say whether this body is the resultant product of a single action or a mixture of several. Generally one strong and powerful action determines the birth of an individual and keeps up the current of life of that particular birth. Some minor actions may be joined to the main trunk or the central thread. Learned persons say that one will have to take several births sometimes to exhaust the fruits of one important virtuous action. The secret of Karma is very mysterious. God only knows because He is the Law-giver. Sometimes highly virtuous and vicious actions bring forth their fruits in that very life itself.

It is impossible for a man to remain without doing any action either through the organs of action, feet, hand, etc., or through the mind. Even if he becomes a sannyasin and retires into a cave in the Himalayas he must continue eating, drinking, answering the calls of nature, sleeping, etc. That is the reason why the Lord says in the Bhagavad Gita: "*Nor can anyone even for an instant remain really actionless; for helplessly is everyone driven to action by the qualities born of nature." (III:5*)

If work ceases to produce rebirth, literally no one can be free. To avoid this difficulty knowledge is credited with powers of destroying Karmas. Again, the Lord says:

"*The fire of wisdom reduces all actions to ashes." (IV:37)*

The last powerful thought that occupies the mind of a man in his dying moment determines the nature of his next birth. You will find in the Bhagavad Gita:

"*Whosoever at the end abandoneth the body, thinking upon any being, to that being only he goeth, O Kaunteja, ever to that conformed by nature."(VIII:6)*

If the thought of tea comes in your mind at the moment of death, you may become a manager of a tea estate in the next birth if you had done virtuous actions, or you may be born to hard labour in a tea estate if you had done any evil actions. A drunkard will have thoughts liquor when he is dying. A licentious man will think of women only when he is about to expire. I saw a dying man who had the habit of of using snuff. When he was in an unconscious state he used to move his fingers towards the nose every now and then and do imaginary snuffing. Obviously he had thoughts of snuff. A medical officer of a hospital used all sorts of abusive terms while he was in a dying condition. Raja Jada Bharata, out of compassion for a deer, took great care of the animal. He gradually developed attachment. The one thought of the deer only occupied his mind when he was about to die So he had to take the birth of a deer. In every Hindu home the names of God, such as Hari Om, Ram, Ram Narayan and Krishna are whispered into the ear of the dying man. The idea is that the dying man may remember the name and form of the Lord and thereby reach the blissful abode. If a man leads a virtuous life for many years, and if he does japa and meditation for a long time, then only through the force of habit will he remember God and His Name at the moment of death.

Buddhism and some other Western philosophers teach that there is no more retrogression for a man when once he takes a human birth. There is no necessity for him to be born as an animal for the sake of demerit. He can be punished in a variety of ways in the human birth itself.

Hindu scriptures say that a man may become a deva or a beast or a bird or vegetable or stone according to his merit or demerit. The Upanishads corroborate this statement. Kapila also agrees on this point. When a man takes the form of a deva, all human habits and tendencies will remain dormant. When a man takes the form of a dog, the animal tendencies and habits only will manifest. Human tendencies will remain suppressed. Some dogs get royal treatment in the palaces of kings. They move in cars, eat good food and sleep on cushions. These are all degenerated human beings.

After death this physical body composed of five elements is cast off like a slough or the coil of a snake. The inner astral body which consists of nineteen elements five organs of action, five organs of knowledge, five pranas, mind, intellect, subconscious mind and egoism heaven, comes back to the physical plane, puts on another physical goes to body and reincarnates. It is this body that contains the impressions of karmas. This body remains till one gets knowledge of the Self and consequent emancipation. Then it disintegrates and the components get involved in the unmanifest.

Heaven and hell are mental creations only. It is the mind that makes a heaven of hell and a hell of heaven. For a vedantin there is neither hell nor heaven. Who is to suffer? The Atman is without action. The Atman is all-pervading. It is ever free.

Karma may have been acquired in many previous births. Actions cause good and bad results. Some actions might have begun to bear fruits and others not. Therefore it is impracticable to consume by begun to bear fruit. Hence the certainty of subsequent embodied enjoyment in one single birth that portion of the Karma which has not existence on account of the unenjoyed portion of the Karma.

The observance of obligatory action has not got the power of rendering inoperative good and bad deeds, which have not begun to bear fruit. There is a penalty if you do not perform obligatory actions. There will be unpleasant consequences. It therefore follows that the observance of obligatory action only has the effect of warding off misery, the certain consequence arising from its non-performance, and has not the effect of consuming previous Karma which is yet to bear fruit. Obligatory action diminishes the sins stored in previous births.

Works are extinguished either by expiatory ceremonies (prayaschitta) or by the knowledge of the Self or Brahman, or by the full fruition of their consequences.

Karma and Self-effort

Prarabdha and self-effort are inseparable. Prarabdha is that portion of sanchita Karma that has given birth to this body. Prarabdha is self-effort of a previous birth. When the Lord works through man, it is self-effort. Grace becomes self-effort. Prarabdha and self-effort are one. They are two names which indicate only one thing. Just as present becomes past and future becomes present; just as there is only present, so also there is only self-effort.

If you go to Ananda Kutir and take a bath in the sacred Ganges, this is your prarabdha. But if you take part in the akhanda kirtan, if you practise japa and intense meditation, this is your self-effort. One may waste his time and sleep in a corner of a room in the ashram, but he may not be benefited spiritually.

You may be destined through prarabdha to get five lakhs of rupees in this birth. You may earn this amount honestly and obtain good merits for your next birth, or you may earn the money in the black- market and reap great demerits. You can neutralise the effects of prarabdha through rightly directed self-effort.

How can self-effort conquer prarabdha when it is guided by prarabdha? Prarabdha is only self-effort which is done in previous births, Prarabdha works as self-effort. You cannot separate them. They are inseparable like heat and fire. Prarabdha is the cause, self-effort is the effect. Cause and effect are inseparable.

Markandeya through self-effort of intense type fought against Yama, the god of Death, and attained the state of immortality. He attained deathlessness through the grace of Lord Siva. Mark again how self-effort works miracles. Visvamitra became Raja Rishi and then a Brahma Rishi also through self-effort.

Sri Vasistha preached self-effort to Rama throughout the Yoga Vasistha. He says to Rama: "*Self-effort is stronger than prarabdha, even as a youth is stronger than an old man."*

Fatalism will lead to dullness and inertia. Rainfall, etc., are not under human control, yet a farmer ploughs his fields; he exercises self- effort. Though the crop may fail due to lack of rain, still man does not lose heart. He performs sacrifices for getting rain and reaps a good harvest. Similarly yoga-practice is self-effort to neutralise evil prarabdha. Though prarabdha is powerful, yoga is even powerful. More

Because of fear of indigestion, one does not stop taking food. Because of fear of lice one does not stop putting on clothes. Because of the swarm of beggars that come one does not close his kitchen. Self- effort is done by everybody; none can sit for a moment without it. However, it should be virtuous. Theft, adultery, etc., are ill-directed and bring pain and rebirth. Strive with discrimination and dispassion. You will attain Self-realisation.

According to actions and desires, the intellect functions. If you do impure action, the intellect also becomes impure. Karmas are according to desires. If you entertain evil desires you will do evil actions. If you entertain virtuous desires you will do virtuous actions. Actions, desires and intellect move in a vicious circle. They are interlaced and inter-dependent. Live in the company of sages and saints. Cultivate virtuous desires and qualities. Your desires, actions and intellect also will become virtuous. You are the master of your destiny. Exert and struggle. You can do and undo things. What Markandeya and Savitri have done, you can also do.

This physical body is the result of ignorance and the action of former births. It does not vanish immediately after the dawn of knowledge, when ignorance is destroyed, but lasts till the force of karma is spent. If it is destroyed soon after knowledge dawns, we will have no gurus or jivanmuktas. The potter's wheel goes on moving even after the force is withdrawn. The force of the arrow cannot be withdrawn when once it goes out from the hands of the archer.

The man who advocates the theory of self-effort says: "Am I a straw to be tossed about hither and thither? I can change my prarabdha, I will undo it by practice of vedanta. I have a free will of my own. I will make it pure and irresistible. I will work out my salvation. I will become free myself."

No one can remain quiet even for a second. No one can become a fatalist. There is an urge or stimulus from within to work. That is v the Bhagavad Gita says: "*Nor can anyone even for an instant remain actionless, for helplessly is everyone driven to action by the qualities born of nature."* Bhagavad Gita (III:5) The theory of prarabdha cannot make anyone a a bhakta it is all prarabdha only; for he is a man of self-

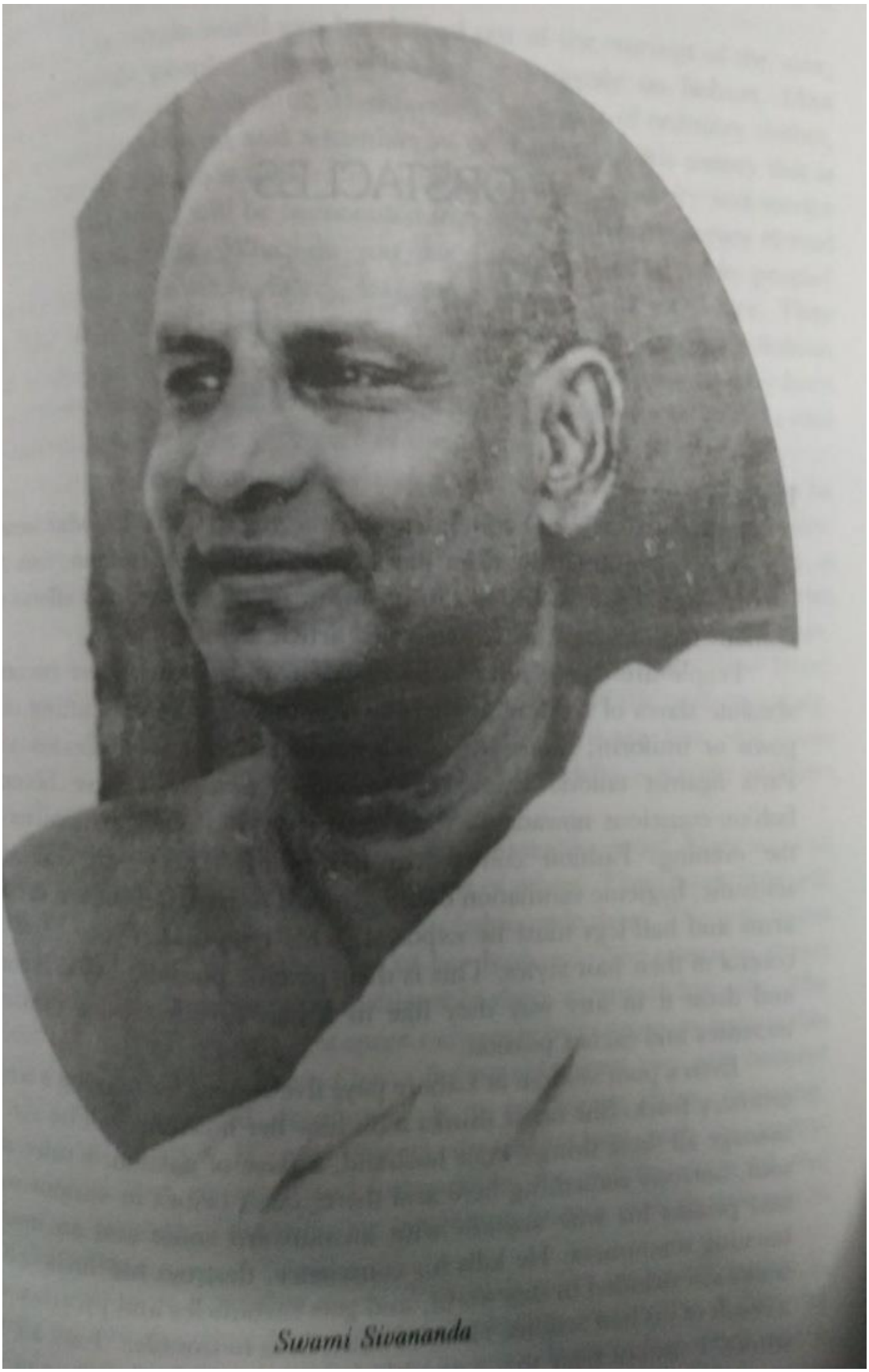
surrender. He has to glorify the power of the Lord. For a vedantin it is all self-effort only; for he is a man of self-reliance. He has to glorify the power of his own strong will. Both are correct from their own view-points. Fatalist. For

God and self-effort are synonymous terms. They are two names for one thing. Trial or luck, self-effort or prarabdha, free will or necessity – all these are synonymous terms. If a man succeeds in his friend? Attempt he calls it self-effort. He says “I really exerted much. I have succeeded.” If he fails, the same man says: “What can I do, my It is all prarabdha. Without Him nothing can be done. Without God not an atom can move, no leaf can wave in the air.” In the Mahabharata you find that exertion and prarabdha combined, bring about fruits. If you are ailing you must exert. You must take medicine. You should leave the results to prarabdha.

Man is doubtless the master of his destiny. What is destiny after all? It is one’s own make-up. You have created certain things. You can destroy them or undo them also. You are thinking in one way now: “I am Mr. So-and-so. I am a brahmin. I am a doctor. I am stout. I am a householder.” This is prarabdha. You can change this particular mode of thinking. Think: “I am Brahman. I am omnipotent. I am the witness. I am God. I am neither the body nor the mind. I am the all- pervading pure consciousness.” This is self-effort.

Prarabdha concerns the past only. The future is in your hands. You can change your destiny. You have a free will to act. You can destroy all evil desires and evil thinking. You can cultivate intense longing for liberation. You can develop right thinking and right acting and thus become a knower of Brahman.

A full-blown jnani or knower of Brahman is above rules and prohibitions. He can do anything he likes. He cannot do a single wrong action. He has disciplined himself in the beginning. He has practised tranquillity and sense-control for a long time. Whatever he does will be in strict accordance with the injunctions of the scriptures. A jnani has no idea of being an actor. He identifies himself with Brahman. He has established himself in his own essential nature.



Swami Sivananda

OBSTACLES

Fashion

This subject is not foreign to karma yoga. Only he who wears simple dress, who is free from the terrible scourge of fashion, can do karma yoga. One should be fully aware of the disastrous effects of fashion. Hence I have introduced this article here.

People are dying after fashion. Men and women have become absolute slaves of fashion. If there is a slight error in the cutting of a gown or uniform, there are damage-suits in courts in London and Paris against tailors. Even Lahore and Rawalpindi have become fashion-conscious nowadays. You can see the multifarious fashions in the evening. Fashion consists in half-nudity. They will call this scientific, hygienic ventilation of the exposed parts. Half the chest, half- arms and half-legs must be exposed. This is fashion. They have full control of their hair styles. This is their psychic power. They can cut it and dress it in any way they like in a hair-dressing salon. Fashion increases and excites passion.

Even a poor woman at Lahore pays five rupees for making a single ordinary frock. She never thinks a bit how her husband will be able to manage all these things. Poor husband, a slave of passion, a miserable soul, borrows something here and there, takes bribes in various ways and pleases his wife anyhow with an outward smile and an inward burning resentment. He kills his conscience, destroys his intellect and walks self-deluded in this world, and gets carbuncles and pyorrhoea as a result of his bad actions. He cries when he is in trouble: “I am a great sinner. I cannot bear this pain. I have done many bad actions in my previous birth. O Lord! Forgive, save me.” But he never tries a bit to improve his lot in this birth.

The whole world can be clothed out of the cuttings of the vain, fashionable people. Money is wasted enormously on fashion. Man wants, after all, very little on this earth- four slices of bread and a tumbler of cold water. If this money that is a pair of ordinary clothes, wasted on fashion is utilised in virtuous actions, in charity and service of society, man will be transmuted into Divinity. He will enjoy eternal peace and bliss. What do you see instead in fashionable people? Restlessness, anxiety, worry, fear, depression and pallor of face. They may be dressed in silken gowns or dinner suits in up-to-date fashion and style with stiff double collar ties and bows, but you see in their faces cheerlessness and ugliness. The canker of worry, greed, passion and hatred has eaten the very core of their hearts.

If you ask a baron of England to remove his boots and hat when he is about to enter a Hindu temple, he feels he has lost all personality. Look at the vanity of an egoistic man! A small piece of leather, a cardboard covered with a cloth make up a mighty baron; minus these he dwindles into an airy nothing. There is no spirit or strength in him. The pulse fails at the wrist. He cannot talk now with the same force. The world is full of people with a small heart and little understanding. They think that turbans and fashionable long-coats, hats and boots constitute a big man. A really big man is one who is simple and free from egoism and likes and dislikes.

Why do ladies and men put on fashionable dress? They want to appear as important people in the eyes of others. They think they will get respect and honour by putting on fashionable dress. The wife wants appear beautiful in the eyes of her husband. She wants to attract him. The husband puts on fashionable dress to attract his wife. The sister of ill-fame wants to get more customers by putting on fashionable dress. This is all delusion. Can a fashionable dress give real beauty? This is all artificial decoration. It is

temporary, false, decaying, glittering beauty! If you possess divine virtues such as mercy, sympathy, love, devotion and forbearance, you will be respected and really honoured. This will give everlasting beauty even though one is dad in rags.

Fashion is a terrible curse. It is a dreadful enemy of peace. It infuses evil thoughts, lust, greed and devilish tendencies. It fills the mind with worldly taints. It begets poverty. Fashion has made you a beggar of beggars. Annihilate this desire for fashion to the very root, Wear simple clothing. Have sublime thinking. Do not keep company with fashionable people. Remember those saints who lead a simple life and those living today who are very simple. Simplicity will cause party. It will infuse divine thoughts. You will be free from worry and unnecessary thoughts. You can devote more time to divine contemplation and spiritual pursuits.

A sattvic man or woman is really beautiful. He or she does not require any artificial decoration with gold pins, with nose-screws or with any ornament or fashionable dress. Millions of people are attracted unconsciously towards them, even when they are in very poor dress.

How simple was Mahatma Gandhi in his dress! He had a loin cloth only. How simple was Ramana Maharishi. He had a kowpeen only. A loin cloth and a kowpeen were their personal effects. They did not want suit-cases or trunks to carry their dress. They were as free as a bird. Avadhoots like Krishnashram of Gangotri, Brahmendar Saraswati of Salem, have not even a kowpeen. They are absolutely nude. They are now in the same state as they were when they were born.

This body is like a big wound or ulcer with various filthy discharges. It has to be bandaged simply with any piece of cloth. Silk, lace borders and frills are not necessary. It is the height of folly to decorate this filthy perishable compound of flesh and bone with artistic borders. Have you realised your foolishness now? Stand up. Give up fashion now. Take a vow. Give me a definite promise that you will use simple clothing from this very second.

You came naked. You will go naked. Your silken waist-thread and upper-cloth even will be snatched for the use of your grand-children, when you are on the death-bed. Why then do you make these ceaseless and selfish efforts for earning money and preparing fashionable dress? Realise your folly. Learn to discriminate. Get wisdom of the Self and rest in everlasting peace.

O fashionable man! O fashionable woman! O ye slayers of the inner Atman! Why do you waste your time, energy and life in vanity, in running after fashionable dress. This is highly preposterous. The beauty of beauties, the undecaying source of beauty, the everlasting beauty is ever shining in the chambers of your heart. The whole beauty of this world is a mere shadow or reflection of that fountain-head of beauty. Purify your heart. Control your mind and the senses. Sit in a room and meditate on this Beauty of beauties, your immortal Friend, the Atman or the highest Self. Realise this Self. Then alone are you really beautiful. Then and then alone are you really happy. Then and then alone are you really rich. Then and then alone are you really a big man.

Smoking

He who smokes is unfit for the practice of karma yoga. Hel becomes dull when he cannot get a whiff of smoke. He cannot work in the absence of cigarettes. He wastes his money that can be very well utilised in the service of others. A karma yogi should be strictly free from the habit of smoking.

Smoking is an evil habit. Smokers bring a little bit of philosophy and medical opinion in support of their principles. They say: "Smoking keeps my bowels free. I get a good motion in the morning. It is very exhilarating to the lungs, brain and the heart. When I sit for meditation after a smoke, I meditate better. Why should I give it up?" Very sound philosophy indeed! They bring in ingenious arguments to support their evil habit. They cannot get rid of this evil habit. There are heavy smokers who can finish a packet of cigarettes within a few hours. This habit starts from early boyhood. A little boy removes a cigarette from his elder brother's pocket and tries a first smoke. He gets a little tickling of nerves and hence he continues stealing daily. After some time he arrives at a stage when he finds it extremely hard to manage with a few cigarettes. He begins to steal money to get a packet independently. The father, brothers and sisters are all heavy smokers. They are the gurus for these little boys for initiation in smoking. What a nasty state of affairs! Horrible indeed is the sight!

The parents are wholly and solely responsible for the evil conduct of their sons and daughters. Any intoxicant breeds a bad habit soon and the man finds it difficult to give up the habit. He falls prey to smoking. You will not get an iota of benefit from smoking. Pray, give up this wrong, foolish imagination. Money is simply wasted. Various nervous diseases and impotence also develop.

Short-sightedness, palpitations of the heart, irregular action of the heart, angina pectoris (a painful disease of the heart), gastric catarch, throat troubles, inflammation of the trachea, tremors, muscular weakness, etc., have been traced to smoking and the consequent nicotine poisoning. There is cumulative effect of nicotine from protracted smoking. The nicotine accumulates in the system by the addition of slow doses and produces deleterious effects on the constitution and different organs.

The correction of any evil habit is very simple. An advocate was a terrible smoker for a period of fifteen years. With one strong and powerful will he abandoned it entirely. Feel strongly first that you should give up that evil habit immediately. Think strongly of the advantages of sobriety and temperance. Then you have already attained success. Will strongly: 'I will give up this intolerable habit this very second. You will succeed. Giving up any bad habit at once is better. The habit of slowly giving it up by gradual reduction generally does not turn out to be productive of good results. Beware of recurrences. Turn your face resolutely when a little temptation tries to reappear. Keep the mind fully occupied in your work. Be always busy. Entertain a strong desire: 'I must become a great man soon! All these habits will take to their heels. Feel strongly: 'I must become a spiritual man.' All these habits will fly away. Use your subconscious mind for the eradication of your habits. It is your intimate bosom friend with whom you should keep companionship at all times. It will make matters all right. Establish new and healthy habits. Develop your will also. Give up bad company and always enjoy satsang or the company of learned sadhus and mahatmas. Their strong currents will overhaul your evil habits. Prayer, japa and meditation will also help in the eradication of this evil habit. There is nothing impossible under the sun. Where there is a will there is a way.

Meat-eating

Meat is not at all necessary for the keeping up of health. Meat- eating is highly deleterious to health. It brings a host of ailments such as tapeworm, albuminuria and other diseases of the kidneys. After all man wants very little on this earth. A few slices of bread and a little dhal will quite suffice to keep up his health, vigour and vitality. Killing of animals for food is a great sin. Instead of killing the egoism and the idea of 'mine-ness', ignorant people kill innocent animals under the pretext of sacrifice to the goddess. But it is really to satisfy their tongue and palate. Horrible! Most inhuman!

Ahimsa is the greatest of all virtues. It is the first virtue that a spiritual aspirant should possess. We should have reverence for life.

Lord Jesus says: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."" Lord Jesus and Mahavira shouted at the top of their voice: "Regard every living being as thyself and harm no one." The law of Karma is inexorable, unrelenting and immutable. The pain you inflict upon another will rebound upon you and the happiness you radiate to another will come back to you, adding to your happiness.

Dr. J. Oldfield, senior physician, Lady Margaret Hospital, writes: "Today, there is the chemical fact in the hands of all, which none can gainsay, that the products of the vegetable kingdom contain all that is necessary for the fullest sustenance of human life. Flesh is unnatural food, and therefore tends to create functional disturbances. In modern civilization it is infected with such terrible diseases (readily communicable to man) such as consumption, fever, intestinal worms, etc., to an enormous extent. There is little need for wonder that flesh- eating is one of the most serious causes of the diseases that carry off ninety-nine out of every hundred people that are born."

Meat-eating and alcoholism are closely allied. The craving for liquor dies a natural death when the meat diet is withdrawn. The question of birth-control becomes very difficult in the case of those who take meat diet. To them mind-control is absolutely impossible. Mark how the meat-eating tiger is ferocious, and the cow and elephant, which live on grass, are peaceful and mild! Meat has a direct evil influence on the compartments of the brain. The first step in spiritual advancement is the giving up of meat diet. The divine light will not descend if the stomach is loaded with meat. In large meat-eating countries cancer mortality is very high. Vegetarians keep up sound health till old age. Even in the West in the hospitals, doctors are now putting patients on a vegetable diet. They convalesce very quickly.

Pythagoras, the Grecian sage, preached: "Do not kill or injure any creature." He condemned meat as sinful food. Just hear what he says: "Beware, O mortals, of defiling your bodies with sinful food! There are cereals, there are fruits, bending their branches down by their weight, and luxurious grapes on the vines. There are sweet vegetables and herbs which the flame can render palatable and mellow. Nor are you denied milk, or honey, fragrant with the aroma of the thyme flower. The bountiful earth offers you an abundance of pure food and provides for meals obtainable without slaughter and bloodshed."

If you want to stop taking mutton, fish, etc., just see with your own eyes the pitiable, struggling condition of sheep at the time of killing. Now mercy and sympathy will arise in your heart. Then you will determine to give up meat-cating. If you fail in this attempt, change your environment and live in a vegetarian hotel where you cannot get flesh, and move in that society where there is only vegetarian diet. Always think of the evils of flesh-eating and the benefits of a vegetable diet. If this also cannot give you sufficient strength to stop this habit, go to a slaughter-house and butcher's shop and personally see the disgusting rotten

muscles, intestines, kidneys and other parts of the animal which emit bad smell. This surely induce vairagya in you and a strong disgust and hatred for meat-eating.

Gambling

Gambling is another dreadful curse. It is a great friend of Satan or anti-God. It has broken the hearts of many. It tantalises, tempts and deludes. A little gain in the first betting titilates the nerves of the gamblers and forces them to bet a large sum. Eventually they lose everything and return home with black or weeping faces. Man becomes bankrupt by gambling. He weeps bitterly. Yet he will not leave it. Wrong habits lead to wrong thinking, wrong samskaras and, through bad company, gambling, cinema, drinking, smoking and meat-eating. The intellect becomes clouded and blunt. Reason and discrimination fail. The intellect becomes perverted.

An enormous amount of money is wasted uselessly in gambling and drinking. No virtue will dwell in the heart of a man who gambles. Gambling is a net which entraps the bewildered souls. There is no evil greater than gambling. All vices cling to a gambler. No real gain will come to a gambler. He is always drowned in sorrow. He drags a cheerless life from day to day. Card-play and horse-racing are modifications of gambling only.

O man! It is very difficult to get a human birth. Life is meant for God-realisation. Perennial joy and eternal bliss are in God. Do not waste this precious life in drinking, gambling, smoking and meat- eating. What will you say to the God of Death at the time of death? No one will help you. You will carry your own thoughts and your actions. Give up gambling, meat-eating, drinking, cinema and smoking from this very second. Give me a definite promise now. I am your friend and well-wisher. Wake up now. Open your eyes. Become a virtuous man. Do good actions. Sing God's name, a potent antidote for all evil habits. Study religious books, seek the company of sages and devotees and all evil habits will be eradicated. Serve. Love. Give. Purify. Concentrate. Meditate. Realise this very second. Time is the most precious thing in the world. Ignorant people waste their whole time in playing cards and in gambling. What a horrible state of affairs! Highly deplorable! How powerful is ignorance. People are lamentably sunk in the mire of darkness. Pitiable specimens of humanity. May the Lord, the Indweller of your heart, give you strength to overcome all these evil habits. May His blessing be upon you all.

INSPIRING STORIES

These very illuminating and inspiring stories inculcate the principles of self-sacrifice and present to the house-holders some really elevating and inspiring ideals.

Tiruvalluvar

In Mylapore, Madras, there lived about two thousand years ago a born siddha and poet by the name of Valluvar, or, as he is more commonly known, Tiruvalluvar. He is regarded as an avatar of Brahma. He married Vasuki and led the life of a householder to show people the way of leading a divine life a life of purity and sanctity while living in the world. All his wise sayings and teachings – are now in book-form and known as Tirukurral. These sayings and teachings are in couplets. Here are some of them:

"Just as the alphabet 'A' is the beginning of all letters, so also God is the beginning for this universe."

"Learn the shastras (scriptures) completely and then act according to their injunctions."

"The anicha flower will fade by smelling but guests are more sensitive if the hosts turn their faces a bit."

"Death is like sleeping in the burial ground, birth is like waking in the morning."

These couplets are thirteen hundred and thirty in number. They contain the essence of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the six Darshanas. Tirukurral is regarded as a universal Bible. It is another Bhagavad Gita, Koran or Zend Avesta.

Some aspirants went to Tiruvalluvar and enquired: "O sage, which ashrama of life is better – grihastha or sannyasa?" The sage did not give any answer. He simply kept quiet. He wanted to teach them the glory of grihastha ashrama by example. His wife was an ideal, chaste and devoted lady who would never disobey his orders, but would implicitly carry them out. Once Tiruvalluvar was taking cold rice in the morning. He said to her: "O Vasuki, the rice is very hot, bring a fan to cool it." Vasuki at this time was drawing water from the well. She at once left the rope and ran to him with a fan to cool down the rice. She did not say to her husband: "How can cool rice be hot? Why do you want a fan now?" She simply obeyed his commands. The vessel that contained water was hanging half-way in the well fearful of her pativrata dharma shakti (the power of a woman who follows the rules of life of a chaste wife devoted to her husband). The aspirants noticed this strange phenomenon and the noble conduct of Vasuki, and were struck with amazement.

On another occasion Valluvar called his wife at one p.m. and said: "Bring a lamp immediately, O Vasuki. I am stitching a piece of cloth. I cannot see the eye of the needle. I cannot pass the thread properly." She did not say: "It is broad daylight now. Why do you want a lamp? You can see the needle properly," but implicitly obeyed his word. The aspirants were much inspired by the ideal life of sage Tiruvalluvar and the exalted conduct of his wife. They did not speak a word to the saint. They quietly left the place with profound satisfaction. They were deeply impressed by the practical and exemplary life led by the sage and his wife. They learnt a lesson that the life of an ideal householder is in no way inferior to that of an ideal sannyasin who is treading the path of renunciation and austerity in the Himalayan caves, and that each is great in his own place.

You cannot find a single devoted wife like Vasuki in these days of modern civilization and scientific advancement. If the husbands of the present day behave like Tiruvalluvar, the wives will say: “My husband has become senseless. He wants to fan the rice when it is cold! He wants a light when there is broad daylight!” The wives will rebuke their husbands and fight with them. They will seek separation.

That house wherein the wife serves the husband with sincere devotion and observes the rules of conduct of a chaste wife, is heaven on earth. That house wherein the wife fights with the husband and disobeys his orders, is a veritable hell on earth. Ladies who practise this need not go to temples. They need not practise any penance. Service of husband becomes worship. They can realise God through service of their husbands. Husbands also should be ideal persons with noble qualities. Husbands are the gurus for their wives. Wives need not get an initiation from any teacher.

Raja Gopichand

Minavaty, mother of Raja Gopichand, gave four instructions to her son.

1. Eat nectar-food.

2. Sleep on a bed of flowers.

3. Live within the iron fort.

4. Enjoy with the most beautiful woman.

The esoteric significance of these instructions is this:

1. When you are really hungry, eat your food. It will be digested well. it will be palatable like nectar. Hunger is the best sauce.

2. When you become really sleepy, lie down; you will get sound sleep even though you lie down on a bed of stones.

3. Live in the company of dispassionate yogis, sannyasins and mahatmas. This is the iron fort. No temptations will allure you.

4. Meditate and raise the thought of Brahman alone and enjoy with Brahman. This is enjoyment with the most beautiful woman.

Story of a Pandit

Once a learned brahmin pandit and an outcaste were crossing the river Ravi in a boat at Lahore. The boat capsized owing to the fierce wind. Both the pandit and the outcast were about to be drowned. They were drinking water again and again. The arrogant and audacious pandit told the outcaste: "Don't drink the same water from the surface of the river which I am drinking. You are polluting me! Drink upper only the water from the lower portion of the river." Look at the petty mindedness of the learned pandit! The outcaste is at the point of death. His life is trembling in the balance and yet the pandit sees so much

difference and entertains the idea of brahmin-superiority! Do you think that the brahmin pandit will feel his oneness with all even after millions of births? What is the earthly use of his learning and knowledge? Fie on those miserable wretched brahmin pandits who are petty-minded and narrow-hearted! Glory to large-hearted pandits!

The Jolly Ant

Once an ant that was living in a mountain of sugar met another ant living in a mountain of salt and asked: "Hallo, my dear friend! How do you do?"

It replied: "I am not as jolly as you are. My mouth is always saltish as I am living in a mountain of salt."

The jolly ant said: "Come along now to my abode. I shall make you jolly. I live in a huge mountain of sugar. I shall make your tongue always sweet."

The unhappy ant followed the jolly ant to the mountain of sugar and lived there for a week. The jolly ant asked his friend: "How do you fare now, my amiable comrade?"

It replied: "Still the same as my lot, my good friend."

"Wash your mouth well with this saccharine solution. Rub your tongue well with this sugar soap. Your tongue needs good brushing up. You were living for several years in a mountain of salt."

It followed the instructions of the jolly ant. From the eighth day its mouth became sweet. It also became very jolly.

Some aspirants keep within themselves some hidden subtle desires, greed, attachment and pride. These defects cling to their minds just as the old salt clung to the tongue of the miserable ant. They complain like the ant of the salt mountain: "We have no spiritual progress. We have no Self-realisation. We are not enjoying spiritual Bliss."

Rub your mind and heart with the soap of japa and selfless service. Eradicate all the desires and impurities of the mind. You will enjoy the supreme bliss of the Supreme Self.

Rajah Janaka

Rajah Janaka once commanded a brahmin who committed a serious crime to leave his dominion at once. The brahmin said: "O, Rajah, kindly tell me the extent of your dominion. Then I will leave your state and settle down in the dominion of another rajah."

Janaka did not say anything in reply. He sobbed heavily. He reflected seriously. Then he swooned suddenly. He came back to his senses after fifteen minutes. He then said: "I have inherited the state of my father. It is under my control, but nothing belongs to me exclusively.

I cannot find my exclusive dominion anywhere, not even in Mithila or in my own progeny. Now real wisdom has dawned in me. I am now under the impression that either I have no dominion at all or all is

my dominion. Either this body is not mine or the whole world is mine, and similarly that of others too. O best of the twice-born! This is my firm conviction. Stay in my dominion as long as you like and enjoy."

The brahmin asked: "O king! What has made you regard this kingdom as not yours or as all yours? How have your renounced the feeling of 'mine-ness' in this kingdom of your ancestors, which you are ruling?"

Janaka replied: "Everything is perishable on the physical plane. Life is evanescent. Everything passes away. I could lay my finger on nothing which I could call mine. I remembered the Vedic text: "It was anybody's property." I reflected in this manner and so I have given up the idea of 'mine-ness'. Hearken carefully now as to how I see my dominion everywhere. I have no desire for the objects that give good smell so I have conquered the earth. I have no desire for tasty things, beautiful forms, soft cushions or beds or music therefore I have conquered water, fire, air and ether. I do not desire anything for the mind, it is therefore under my perfect control. I do actions for the gods, for the ancestors, for all beings and for those who come to my door."

Then the brahmin smiled and said: "*O king! I am dharma in disguise. I have come to learn something about you. You are the only person to turn this wheel, the name of which is Brahman, the spoke of which is reason, which never turns back and which is kept to its course by the quality of goodness as its circumference." (Anugita 17).*

An Ideal Karma-jnana-yogi

A sadhu went to the court of Rajah Janaka and observed all his manifold activities. He then thought within himself: 'How can we call Rajah Janaka a jnani? How can we take him for a spiritual man? He is only a worldly man. He is entrapped in so many worldly matters. He talks on worldly topics.' Rajah Janaka, through his eye of intuition, understood the mentality of the sadhu.

Calling the sadhu to his side, Janaka said: "You seem to be a culprit. You are unfit to wear the garb of a saint. You are not thinking of God. The nature of fault-finding is deeply ingrained in you. I have decided to give you capital punishment. You will be hanged within a week."

The king ordered his servants to give the sadhu vegetables without salt, sweetmeats with chillies, and delicious kheer, almonds and raisins with tamarind, daily. The sadhu was terribly alarmed. He spent sleepless nights. He became very nervous. He always thought of the gallows. He dreamt daily that his neck was being tied with a rope. He became very thin and pale.

Rajah Janaka sent a servant to call the sadhu on the seventh day for execution. The sadhu was unable to stand before the king. He trembled and fell on the ground senseless. He came back to consciousness after ten minutes when Janaka offered him some fruits and a cup of milk with salt. The sadhu drank it. But his mind was on the gallows.

The sage-king then said: "Look here, O sadhu! How do you like the taste of the milk now? Was it good? Did the milk contain sufficient sugar? How did you relish the food these seven days?"

The sadhu replied: "O Rajah, I did not feel any taste in the food or in the milk that you offered me just now. My mind is only on the gallows all the time. I see only gallows everywhere. I have become a prey to the thought of the gallows. I did not know whether the vegetables or soup contained salt or sugar."

Rajah Janaka said: "O sadhu, just as your mind is always on the gallows, so also my mind is always fixed on Brahman through my intense practice of deep meditation, although I engage myself in various sorts of worldly activities. Though I am in this world, I am out of the world always. Do you understand my mental state? In future do not look to the faults of others. Mind your own business always. Look to the good points of others. Glorify others. Do intense meditation. Realise. Work for the world, unattached as I am. Now you can go."

The sadhu was very much pleased with the king. He now realised his folly and the true glory of King Janaka. He understood fully that Janaka was established in the direct knowledge of Brahman, and had perfect balance of mind amidst multifarious activities. He prostrated before him again and again and took leave. Then he did intense sadhana, realised the Self and followed the example of Rajah Janaka in doing service to the world.

Rajah Janaka was a full-blown jnani though he worked in the world. His jnana was tested. He was in the Durbar hall when a messenger brought the news that there was fire in the city. Janaka said:

My wealth is unlimited, and yet I have nothing. Even if the whole of Mithila is burnt, yet nothing is lost to me."

The name of Rajah Janaka is always associated with karma yoga. In the Bhagavad Gita also Lord Krishna speaks to Arjuna: "*Janaka and others indeed attained perfection by action; then, having an eye to the welfare of the world also, thou should perform action. Whatever a great man does, that other men also do, the standard he sets up, by that the other people go. Therefore, without attachment, constantly perform action which is duty, for by performing action without attachment man verily reaches the supreme." (III:19,20,21)*

It is very difficult to find out the state of a jnani by his external actions. Jnana is purely a mental state. It is an internal condition. A jnani only can understand another jnani. Knowledge of the Self is imperishable and inexhaustible wealth. The wealth of the three worlds is nothing when compared to the priceless treasures of the Self or Atman. That is the reason why Janaka was not at all affected by the destruction of the city of Mithila. He stood adamantine on the rock of direct knowledge of Atman.

Highest Self-sacrifice

King Yudhishthira performed a great sacrifice after the battle of Kurukshetra was over. He gave very rich presents to the priests and to the poor. All were greatly astonished at the grandeur of this magnanimous sacrifice. They exclaimed with great joy: "We have never seen in our life-time such a splendid sacrifice. There has never been such a glorious sacrifice in the annals of the world's history. Glory to King Yudhishthira! Glory to Arjuna! Glory to the Pandavas and Draupadi!"

A small mongoose appeared on the scene. Half of his body was golden and the other half was brown. He rolled on the ground where the sacrifice was performed. He then exclaimed with sorrow: "This is no sacrifice at all. Why do you praise it in such glowing terms? You are all hypocrites and liars."

The people replied: "What! You silly mongoose! Have you not realised the glory of this great sacrifice? Thousands of poor people have become very rich. Millions of people have been sumptuously fed. Jewels

and clothes have been distributed in abundance. The world has never witnessed such wonderful sacrifice. Get thee gone, O miserable wretch, O foolish mongoose!"

The mongoose replied: "My dear sirs, don't be annoyed with me unnecessarily. Just hear my words with patience. There was a poor brahmin in a small village. Fle lived in a small hut with his wife, son and daughter-in-law. There was a great famine. The whole family suffered for months. They were starving for days together. One day the poor man brought some rice and dhal. When they were ready to take their meal, they heard a voice at their door. The brahmin opened the door and found a guest. He said: 'O venerable guest, come inside. Take your seat and your food. He gave his portion of the food to the guest. The guest said: 'Sir, my hunger is not satisfied. I am starving for the last fifteen days. The wife said to her husband: 'My lord, here is my share. Kindly give him this portion of food. I am thy partner in life. It is my duty to share with you the weal and woe of life. The scriptures declare this emphatically. The guest ate this portion also, but still his hunger was not appeased. The son said: 'Dear father, I must do my duty to you, otherwise people will criticise me. I must please you in the fulfilment of your holy wish. Give him my share also. The guest ate this and yet he remained unsatisfied. The wife of the son said: 'O venerable father-in-law, you have all performed the greatest self- sacrifice. I must also join in this. Kindly give him my portion too.' The guest ate this portion and was fully satisfied. He then blessed the poor brahmin and his family and departed in great joy. These four persons died of starvation the same day. A few grains of rice were found on the ground. I rolled myself on those particles, Half of my body became golden. Since then I have been travelling all over the world to find out another sacrifice like that. Nowhere have I found one. Nowhere have I been able to convert the other half of my body into gold. This sacrifice of Yudhishthira has not turned the other half of my body into gold. That is the reason why I say that this is no sacrifice at all. Have you understood my point well? Do not become angry. Truth can never hurt the feeling of others."

The priests and others who enjoyed the sacrifice of Rajah Yudhishthira were put to shame. They hung down their heads. They realised now what true sacrifice was, that it should be free from pride and vanity.

Mark here the glory of the poor brahmin and his remarkable spirit of self-sacrifice! He was an ideal householder. He was an ideal karma yogi. He reached the same state of liberation as that of a knower of Brahman or a raja yogi. May you all shine as did this poor brahmin!

Story of a Bird

Four travellers had to take their rest one night under a big tree. It was winter, so they started a fire to warm themselves. A bird lived in the tree with its wife and children. The little bird looked down and saw the travellers. It said to its wife: "My dear, what shall we do now? There are some guests in our house. They are hungry. We must entertain them somehow. We are householders and should show hospitality. We have nothing to offer them. I will offer my body to them." It dropped itself into the fire below and got roasted.

The wife of the bird witnessed the noble action of the husband. It thought within itself: "There are four guests. The flesh of one bird is not sufficient for all of them. Let me also do some sacrifice in the fulfilment of the pure wish of my husband. The duty of the wife is to serve and please the husband at all times." It also plunged itself into the fire and soon perished.

The five little ones said: “Still the food is not sufficient for our four guests. Our parents have done their duty well. We should keep up the name of our worthy parents. They have done great sacrifice; we should also contribute something towards it.” They also fell into the fire and were burnt to death.

The four travellers were struck with utter amazement when they witnessed the deeds of the little birds. They did not eat the flesh. They remained without food.

Mark here the spirit of self-sacrifice of these little birds! Draw inspiration by remembering the ideal life led by them. A karma yogi or a householder should possess the virtue of self-sacrifice to a remarkable degree. He should be prepared to give up the body at any time to a noble cause. That karma yogi or householder who sacrifices his body for a noble cause reaches the same goal that is attained by a raja yogi through asamprajnata samadhi, or by a hatha yogi through awakening of the kundalini and taking it to sahasrara, or by a vedantin through intense meditation. No pain, no gain. Greatness cannot be achieved without sacrifice both in the physical and spiritual planes.

APPENDIX

Special Instructions for Karma Yogis

1. God in every face, in everything.
2. Repeat mentally or silently or with the breath the name of the Lord, such as 'Hari Om', 'Sri Ram', or your own mantra, even while you work in the office. A strong habit of repetition of the mantra will soon be formed.
3. Give up meat, hot curries, onions and garlic. Take sattvic foods like milk, fruits, bread, pulses and vegetables, etc. Eat simple food. Wear simple clothing. Practise celibacy or moderation.
4. Feel that God is the inner Ruler who manipulates your mind, body and the senses. Therefore give up the thought: 'I am the doer'. Feel: 'I am an instrument in His hands. God works through my hands, cats through my mouth and sees through my eyes.'
5. Do not expect any fruit for your actions, not even approbation, thanks, gratitude, appreciation, applause, return of salute or smile, etc.
6. Offer all actions, their fruit, body, mind, senses and the soul as flowers at the lotus-feet of the Lord.
7. Never, never say: 'I have helped that man.' Feel and think: "That man gave me an opportunity to serve. This piece of service has helped me to purify my mind. I am extremely grateful to him."
8. Feel that the world is a manifestation of God. Feel that you are serving God in all beings.
9. Discipline the senses. Control them. Develop alertness, decision, discrimination, mercy, tolerance, forgiveness, discernment, patience, cosmic love and equal vision. Have a balanced mind. Be calm, cool and serene always.
10. Combine bhakti or jnana with karma yoga.
11. Serve poor, sick people. There is no sacrifice that is greater than this. Serve everyone with love and full faith. Serve the Lord in all. Serve your country and society. Serve your parents, brothers and sisters, the sadhus, sannyasins, bhaktas, mahatmas and your spiritual teachers with devotion and a full heart. Massage the legs of sick people. Feel that you are touching the body of the Lord (virat). Feel that the cosmic energy is flowing through your hands. Tap the very source, the store-house of cosmic energy.
12. Be good and do good. Become an embodiment of goodness. Keep the body strong and healthy. Note in your spiritual diary the number of good and evil actions that you do daily.

Spirituality the Basis of Real Civilisation

Spirituality is the basis of real civilisation. It establishes peace among men. Real civilisation will exist only if people become more spiritual and moral. Happiness and peace must be sought in spiritual life. Spirituality should be man’s foremost religion.

The life of a nation cannot enjoy sustained safety or perpetual peace without being canalised and regulated by sublime norms or inspiring spiritual principles. Spiritualise politics – then alone will there be peace in the world. Spiritual regeneration of humanity is the urgent need of the hour.

The heritage of spiritual strength is a nation's greatest asset. Give always the first place to spiritual values. Not matter but spirit is the essential requisite. Spirit should direct matter. Mere national gains and possessions will not give real and abiding peace or happiness to human beings if they are devoid of moral and spiritual values. Politics infused by spiritual life strengthens the bond of love.

The greater the possession of riches by people, the more is their moral turpitude. The possession of riches is a hindrance to real growth. Temporal welfare is essential, but not by running down moral and spiritual values.

Materialism as a cult is bad, for it destroys the moral refinement in man. Material wealth is necessary for the good of the people. It is only the craving for material enjoyment to the detriment of spiritual values

• See page 173

That is denied

The ethical message of a religion of action grounded in the recognition of a unitary spiritual ideal should be broadcast.

The science of the heart is more important than the science of the mind

Categories

1. Karma (action) is threefold: (a) kayika (bodily), (b) vachika (verbal) and (c) manasika (mental)
2. There are two kinds of actions (a) sakama karma (b) nishkama karma.
   (a) Sakama karma includes all spiritual sacrifices and other duties enjoined on man for the attainment of heaven and other worlds. It is attended with birth and death and rebirth, called the wheel of samsara.
   (b) Nishkama karma yoga leads to purification of the mind, and prepares the aspirant for the reception of the light of Knowledge. The nishkama karma yogi is one whose goal of life is freedom from the wheel of birth and death. Nishkama karma is the sadhana for the attainment of this freedom.

3. There is a further general classification of karma which falls under five headings: Satkarma (good deeds), dushkarma or kukarma (bad deeds), akarma (inaction), misrita karma (mixed deeds) and vikarma (perverted actions).

By good deeds one attains the world of devas, by bad deeds, perverted actions and inaction one attains the lower births; and by mixed deeds one attains the human birth.

4. Karma (action) has been further classified under the following particular headings:

I. Lawful (vidhi)
II. Forbidden or prohibitory (nishedha).

Lawful actions are the injunctions of the scriptures. They are beneficial to the perfomer. 'Speak the truth! 'Do virtuous actions. These are lawful actions. They are best calculated to purify the heart of the performer and to prepare his mind for the reception of divine experience.

Lawful actions are of four kinds

a. nitya karmas - daily rites
b. naimittika karmas-occasional rites
c. kamya karmas optional rites
d. prayaschitta karmas – penances

Morning bath and worship in the three periods of time constitute daily rites. If you do not perform them daily you incur sin. You are subject to the sin of ommission.

Performance of nitya karma does not accrue any special merit.

The rites done during eclipse and funerals etc. Are occasional rites. Non-performance of these rites brings sin. However, that man who is struggling to obtain liberation will not be affected by the harmful effects of leaving the above two rites. Optional rites are performed with a motive of obtaining definite results. Sacrifices that are done for getting rain, and the offerings to fire for obtaining heaven, are examples of optional rites.

Penance is done for the destruction of sin. In the Code of Manu you will find various kinds of penances for the destruction of various kinds of sins – such as the murder of a brahmin, killing of a cow, drinking alcohol or taking forbidden foods, adultery, etc. Penance is of two kinds, viz., extraordinary (asadharana) and ordinary (sadharana). Extraordinary penances are those which are prescribed in the Code of Manu for the destruction of particular sins. Carrying a skull in the hand and living on alms after renouncing all property, living underneath a tree, long pilgrimage till the end of one's life, and openly admitting before the public one's crime, are prescribed. If anyone repents and openly admits his minor offences, the sin is washed away. In doing penance the offender actually suffers, he punishes himself by long fasting and other ordeals as described above. Action and reaction are equal and opposite. Complete fasting on Ekadasi and Pradosh days destroys many sins. (Every one of you should practise this.) Bathing in the Ganges, japa and ordinary pilgrimage constitute ordinary penance for the destruction of small sins.

Forbidden actions are those which are interdicted by the scriptures, such as: 'Do not drink liquor." "Thou shalt not kill." "Thou shalt not steal', etc. They are harmful. They hurl the doer down to lower births.

5. Two-fold is the nature of karma which concerns an individual. Swadharma is one's own duty as ordained by the scriptures. Paradharma is the duties prescribed for another.
6. Humanity is divided into four main castes and into four different orders.
7. The duties vary according to one's own caste and order.
8. The four castes are: brahmana, kshatriya, vaisya and shudra.
   The four orders are: brahmacharya (celibate student), grihastha, householder), vanaprastha and sannyasa.
9. Duties of the four castes are given in Bhagavad Gita in Chapter 18, verses 42, 43 and 44. They are: self-control, internal and external penance, cleanliness, tolerance, straightforwardness, knowledge and faith are duties of a brahmana.

Courage, valour, shrewdness, non-desertion from battle and lordly nature are the duties of a kshatriya.

Agriculture, cow-protection and trade are the duties of a vaishya. Service of the other three castes is the duty of the shudra.

10. Duties of the four orders:

Brahmacharya: Performance of sandhya, service of guru, practice of celibacy and study of Vedas.

Grihastha: Study and teaching of the Vedas, protection of the family, performance of the panchamaha yajna and worship of God. (Panchamaha yajnas are sacrifice to the gods, sacrifice to the manes, receiving guests, feeding of animals and study of scriptures – Vedas).

Vanaprastha: Retirement into the forest, worship of fire, study of the Aranyakas and Upanishads, and worship of God.

Sannyasa: Meditation on the Self, study of the Prasthanatrayi, and Self-realisation. After realisation he may give out and share with other, less evolved brethren, the knowledge he has acquired.

Sannyasins are of four types: kutichaka, bahudaka, hamsa, paramahamsa.

Avadhuta is of a very high order who, having attained the highest realisation, are above all rules. (They are also called ativarnashramis.)

11. The special duties of householders (grihasthas) in regard to their domestic life after the marriage are the following: Narbhadana- ceremony in connection with impregnation.

Pumsavana - Ceremony for birth of a male child.

Simanta- ceremony during the eighth month of pregnancy to ensure safe delivery.

Jatakarma- post-natal ceremony (on birth).

Namakarana -naming (christening) ceremony.

Niskramana - Taking the child out in the open for the first time. Annaprasana - First cereal-giving ceremony after 6 months.

Vapana - first shaving of head.

Karnavedha - boring hole in the ear lobe.

Vratadesha - investiture with the holy thread.

Vedarambha - commencement of study of Vedas.

Kriyavidhi- laying down rules of rituals.

Keshashanta - cutting of the hair before marriage.

Vivaha - marriage.

Agniparigraha – maintaining the sacred fire.

Tretagni Sangraha – collecting the three fires when starting to lead vanaprastha life.

12. There are certain universal laws governing karma: Law of cause and effect, law of action and reaction, law of compensation, law of reincarnation, law of retribution, law of resistance.
13. Karma is of three kinds:

(a) Prarabdha karma (b) sanchita karma and (c) agami karma.

Prarabdha is one's one previous karmas which gave rise to the present incarnation. They are threefold: iccha, aniccha and pareccha. Sanchita is the accumulated karmas which are yet to bear fruit, of which prarabdha forms a part.

Agami karma is the current actions which will fructify in future. (The actions performed by a jivanmukta after his realization is also termed agami karma.)

14. Feel that the whole world is a manifestation of God. Feel that you serve the Lord when you serve anybody.

Virtues to be Cultivated

Alms-giving

Balance of mind

Brahmacharya

Brahma chintan

Calm and cheerful nature

Courage

Desirelessness

Diligence

Discipline

Equanimity

Fearlessness

Feeling God's presence at all times.

Forbearance

Frankness

Generosity

Humility

Mauna

Nobility

Obedience to all

Patience

Perseverance

Power of endurance

Purity of heart

Renunciation

Self-control and sacrifice

Serenity

Serving nature

Simplicity

Sincerity

Strong will-power

Speaking the truth

Tolerance

Tranquillity of mind

Unfailing devotion

Unshakeable faith in God.

Dispassion.

Working without attachment

Vices to be Eradicated

Ambition

Anger

Arrogance

Attachment

Avaricious nature

Avenging nature

Back-biting

Censure & criticism

Conceit

Crooked-mindedness

Cruelty

Deceitful nature

Depression

Desire

Double-dealing

Dullness

Egoism

Envy

Gambling

Harsh speech

Hatred

Hypocrisy

Jealousy

Laziness

Lust

Mischief-mongering

Miserliness

Obstinacy

Over-eating

Pride

Scandal-mongering

Selfishness

Untruth

Spiritual Diary

Prepare a statement of daily spiritual diary as shown in the following table every month and verify whether you are progressing or not. If you want quick spiritual progress you should never neglect to record everything in your diary. To change the worldly nature, it needs rigorous sadhana. Apart from these questions you must also mention the following in the remark's column:

1. The names of the asanas
2. The kind of meditation
3. What books you keep for study
4. What your special diet is
5. Whether you keep a japa mala or not
6. Whether you have a separate room for your meditation
7. Whether you read the Bhagavad Gita with meaning

Do not be ashamed to mention your mistakes, vices and failures. This is meant for your own progress only. Do not waste your precious hours. It is enough that you have wasted so many years in idle gossiping. Enough, enough of the troubles you have had all these days in satisfying your senses. Do not say: "From tomorrow I will be regular." That tomorrow is for the worthless worldly-minded fools. Be sincere and start doing sadhana from this very moment. If you are really sincere, He is ever ready to help you, to give you a push in your spiritual march. Make out a copy of this diary and send it to your guru (spiritual preceptor) who will guide you, remove all the obstacles in your sadhana and give you further lessons.

The Spiritual Diary is a whip to goad the mind towards righteousness, ethical perfection and God. If you regularly maintain this diary you will get solace, peace of mind and make progress in the spiritual path. Maintain a daily diary and realize the marvellous results. Here are the items of the diary. Draw daily columns and fill in the various items every day. Review your progress once a month and send a copy of the diary to your spiritual preceptor.

The Spiritual Diary

Month: Dates

Questions								
1. When did you get up from bed? 2. How many hours did you sleep? 3. How many malas of japa did you do? 4. How long in kirtan? 5. How many pranayamas did 6. How long did you perform yoga asanas? you do? 7. How many verses of the Gita did you read? 8. How long did you spend in the company of the wise (satsanga)? 9. How long did you meditate in one asana? 10. How many hours did you give in charity? 11. How long in unselfish service? 12. How much did you give in charity? 13. How many mantras did you write? 14. How long did you practice physical exercise? 15. How many lies did you tell, and with what self-punishment? 16. How many times and how long of anger, and with what self-punishment? 17. How many hours did you spend in useless company? 18. How many times did you fail in brahmacharya (celibacy)? 19. How long in the study of religious books? 20. How many times did you fail in the control of evil habits, and with what self-punishment? 21. How long did you concentrate on your Ishta Devata, abstract or concrete meditation? 22. How many days did you observe fast and vigil? 23. Were you regular in your meditation? 24. What virtue are you developing? 25. What evil quality are you trying to eradicate? 26. Which sense-organ is troubling you most? 27. When did you go to bed?								

Name_____

Address_____

Signature_____

GLOSSARY

Adharma: All that is contrary to righteousness

Advaita: Non-duality; monism Agami: Karma now produced, to be enjoyed later

Ahimsa: Non-violence

Apta-dharma: Duty as laid down by the sages

Ashram: Monastery

Ashrama: Order of life

Asamprajnata samadhi: Highest superconscious state

Atma: The Self

Atma bhav: Feeling that everything is the Self

Atma jnana: Direct knowledge of the Self

Avatara: Incarnation

Ayurveda: A branch of Indian medicine

Bhakta: Devotee

Bhakti: Devotion; love of God

Bhava: Attitude expressing a particular relationship with God

Bhavana: Feeling; mental attitude

Bhikshu: Mendicant

Brahmacharya: Celibacy; the first Stage of the Hindu's life, viz. Celibate student's life

Brahman: The Absolute Reality

Darshan: Holy company

Deva: Deity

Dharma: Righteousness

Ekadasi: Eleventh day of the Hindu lunar fortnight

Grihastha: Householder

Guna: Quality born of nature Guru: Teacher, preceptor

Ishwara: The Lord

Japa: Repetition of God's name

Again and again

Jiva: Individual soul with ego

Jivanmukta: One who is liberated in this life

Jivatma: Individual soul

Jnana: Knowledge; wisdom of the Reality or Brahman the Absolute

Jnana-yajna: Dissemination of knowledge; offering of the individual to the Supreme

Jnani: Sage

Kamandalu: Waterpot used by Yogis usually made from a gourd

Kapha: Phlegm; one of the three humours according to Ayurveda

Karma: Action

Karma - *Law of:* The law of cause and effect (As ye sow so shall ye reap)

Karma indriyas: Organs of action – tongue, hands, feet, genital organ and anus

Kevala: Alone; single, independent; the Absolute

Kechari mudra: A hatha yoga kriya Kriya: Physical action; particular exercise in hatha yoga

Kriyamana: See agami

Kshatriya: A member of the warrior caste

Kumbhaka: Breath retention

Mahatma: Great soul; sage

Mantra: Sacred syllable or set of words through the reflection and repetition of which one attains perfection

Manomaya kosha: One of the sheaths of the Self; consisting of the mind

Mauna: Vow of silence

Maya: The veiling and projecting power of the universe

Nirvikalpa samadhi: The super- conscious state where there is no mind or the triad (knower, known and knowledge) or any idea whatsoever

Nishkama: Without desire

Niyama: The second step in raja yoga

Ojas shakti: Spiritual energy created through the practice of celibacy

Paddy: Rice in its natural state

Pandit: Priest

Parabhakti: Supreme devotion to God, where the devotee transcends all forms of ritualistic worship

Pitta: Bile; one of the three humours of Ayurveda

Prakriti: Causal matter

Prana: Vital energy; life-breath; life-force

Pranayama: Control of life-force through breathing

Prarabdha karma: The karma which determines one's present life Purushartha: Human effort; right exertion

Rajas: The principle of dynamism; one of the three gunas

Rajasic: Passionate; active; restless Raja yoga: Yoga of mysticism.(See Raja Yoga: The Yoga System of Patanjali)

Raja yogi: One who follows the path of raja yoga

Sadhaka: Spiritual aspirant

Sadhana: Spiritual practices

Sadhu: Holy man; a sannyasi

Sahasrara: Region in the top of the head in the form of a thousand- petalled lotus, where kundalini shakti unites with Lord Shiva. (See Health & Hatha Yoga)

Samadhi: State of super consciousness

Samsara: The process of worldly life

Samskara: Innate tendency

Samyama: Perfect restraint; an all-complete condition of balance and repose, concentration, meditation and samadhi

Sanchita karma: That portion of our karma that is responsible for our present birth

Sankhya: An Indian system of philosophy

Sankirtan: Communal chanting of names of God

Sannyas: Renunciation

Sannyasi(n): A monk; one who has embraced a life of complete renunciation

Satchidananda: Existence, knowledge, bliss absolute

Sattva: Light; purity

Sattvic: Pure

Siddhi: Psychic power

Shakti: Power; energy, force

Sloka: Verse

Sudra: One of the servant class

Svadharma: One's own prescribed duty in life

Tamas: Ignorance; inertia; darkness Tamasic: Dull; lethargic; stupid

Tapas: Austerity Tratak: Steady gazing at a fixed point; a hatha yoga exercise. (See Health & Hatha Yoga)

Urdhvareta: A yogi in whom the seminal energy flows upwards. (See Health & Hatha Yoga)

Utsava: Festivity

Vairagya: Dispassion

Vaishya: Trader; shopkeeper

Vanaprastha: One who leads the third stage of life

Vata: Wind; one of the three humours of the body

Vedanta: School of Hindu thought based primarily on the Upanishads

Vedantin: Follower of vedanta

Virya: Seminal energy; strength; power

Viveka: Discrimination between the Real and the unreal

Vivekin: A man of discrimination Vritti: Thought-wave; mental modification

Yama: The first limb of raja yoga. (See Raja Yoga: The Yoga System of Patanjali)

Yoga: Union of the individual soul with the Supreme; any course that makes for such union

Yogi: One who practises yoga; a spiritually advanced person with a perfectly unruffled mind under all conditions

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Karma yoga is suited to the dynamic man of action. But no-one can live without action, so everyone can benefit from its principles.

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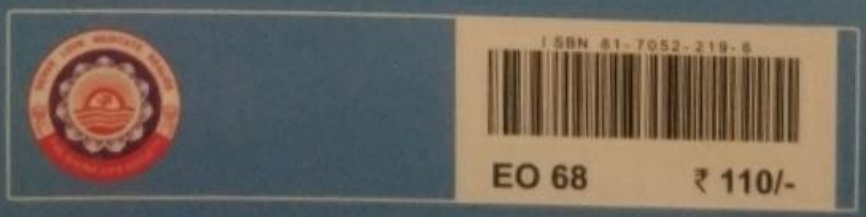

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